TURKMENBASHY : THE PROPAGATION OF PERSONAL RULE IN CONTEMPORARY TURKMENISTAN

Courtney Anne Mills

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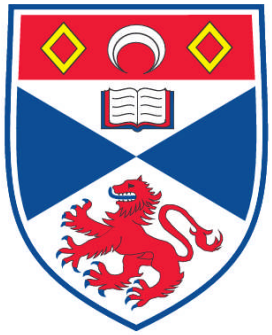

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TURKMENBASHY:

The Propagation of Personal Rule in Contemporary Turkmenistan

COURTNEY MILLS

Submitted for the degree of PhD at the School of International Relations
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Abstract

Turkmenistan President Saparmurat Niyazov (known as Turkmenbashy, or "father of Turkmens"), the longest-serving leader in post-Soviet space, has ruled his country with increasing repression and megalomaniacal idiosyncrasy over the past decade. Under Niyazov's rule, alternative political parties have been banned, non-official religions persecuted, and free media outlets closed. State institutions, subsumed by the expansive presidency, are characterized by constant personnel purges and an arbitrary management style, and have become increasingly dysfunctional. Grandiose marble state buildings, large museums and golden presidential statues dominate Ashgabat, Turkmenistan's capital. Socioeconomic indicators, however, are at low levels, and poverty and unemployment have reached new highs.

Niyazov has formulated, transmitted and imposed a new Turkmen national program as a method of political legitimation. This "pseudo-ideology" has been elaborated since independence in a series of texts published under the president's name—Niyazov's quasi-spiritual works are required reading throughout all levels of education in Turkmenistan and are heavily propagated through official mass media and cultural associations.

This thesis seeks to understand the forms that the legitimation program has taken, Niyazov's methods of propagation, and the ways in which the regime's program resembles those of similar historical regimes. Turkmenistan, which appears to closely approximate the ideal type of a sultanistic regime (as defined by Juan Linz), is described in this thesis with reference to cases of sultanistic leadership from the post-colonial period in sub-Saharan Africa. This thesis examines in turn Niyazov's use of official ritual and symbolism, media and education, historical revision, and architecture to secure normative compliance. Historical references help to contextualize a discussion of Turkmenistan, an often-overlooked country in post-Soviet Central Asia, but one that promises to grow in strategic importance due to its geopolitical location and bounty of natural resources.

Declarations

I, Courtney Mills, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 96,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

Date: 28 September 2005 Signature of candidate:

I was admitted as a research student in September 2002 and as a candidate for the degree of PhD in May 2004; the higher study for which this is a record was carried out in the University of St. Andrews between 2003 and 2005.

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I hereby certify that the candidate has fulfilled the conditions of the Resolution and Regulations appropriate for the degree of PhD in the University of St. Andrews and that the candidate is qualified to submit this thesis in application for that degree.

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Figure 1: Map of Turkmenistan, Adapted from the University of Texas Perry-Castaneda Map Collection

INTRODUCTION AND OUTLINE OF STUDY

Despite a large literature discussing political developments in post-communist countries following the collapse of the Soviet Union, relatively little systematic work has been done on political developments in the post-Soviet state of Turkmenistan.[1] Scholars have, to a large extent, investigated the role of political institutions in political and economic transitions in new democracies, as well as the effects of institutions on the development of the political and social spheres in post-communist societies in particular. Discussions of institution-building and civil society development speak very little to the political conditions in the most repressive of the Central Asian states, which, due to the absence of true institutionalization, might be better discussed with reference to the literature on personal rule.

Central Asia's most extreme example of a personalist regime, that of Saparmurat Niyazov in Turkmenistan, represents strongman rule at its most eccentric– Niyazov's personality cult, which has become increasingly embedded over the past decade, has effectively removed Turkmenistan from much of the academic literature on development and state building. Niyazov (known as Turkmenbashy, or "father of Turkmens"), the longest-serving leader in post-Soviet space, has ruled his country with increasing repression and megalomaniacal idiosyncrasy over the past decade, earning international notoriety and winning himself a spot among the world's most repressive dictators.[2] With just a few exceptions, discussions of Central Asian political developments or democratization include Niyazov's regime as just a

[1] The most recent work published in the West dealing in detail with Turkmenistan was Adrienne Edgar's book *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), which explores the Soviet nation-building efforts in Turkmenistan during the early years of Soviet rule. Regarding Turkmenistan's political situation, the most significant work written outside of Turkmenistan has been S. Demidov's 2002 book, *Postsovetskii Turkmenistan* (Moscow, Natalis), which deals with changes under Niyazov's regime. Cummings and Ochs provide a chapter on Niyazov's regime as an "inglorious semi-sultanism" in Sally Cummings, ed., *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002).

[2] Freedom House, "Turkmenistan" *The World's Most Repressive Regimes* (2003), pp. 79-83. See also Reed Tucker, "5 Tyrants," *Esquire* Volume 140, Issue 2, p. 110

footnote. Serious considerations of political life in Turkmenistan are generally put off for a day when Turkmenistan in fact possesses something resembling a vibrant political life.[3]

Turkmenistan is located at the southernmost frontier of the former Soviet Union, bordered by Iran and Afghanistan to the south and Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to the north. Its western border lies along the Caspian Sea, and Caspian oil and extensive natural gas reserves provide much of the current regime's funding and also increase international interest in this country. The shadow economy and pervasive political corruption, however, have deterred many foreign investors for the time being. Niyazov's regime has banned all political opposition, eliminated independent media outlets, and forcefully propagated a national narrative that is intertwined with a cult of personality almost unparalleled in the contemporary period.

There are very few academic studies of Turkmenistan, particularly in the West, largely because of the constraints placed upon researchers in this very tightly-controlled country. Some interesting historical work has been done since the independence of Turkmenistan from the Soviet Union—although they do not directly contribute to my study of the contemporary political climate in post-Soviet Turkmenistan, these historical studies lend context to the discussions of Turkmen identity formation today. Of particular note is a study by Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan*, published in 2004—Edgar describes in great detail some of the early nation-building efforts in Turkmenistan during the first decades of the Soviet Union. As I will explain in a later chapter, the efforts of the

[3] As it stands, decision making is completely at the discretion of the president, who has become increasingly erratic in his edicts—in August 2004 alone, he decreed that all learner drivers must pass a 16-hour course on his spiritual guidebook *Ruhnama* to gain a drivers license; that television presenters should wear less makeup; to ban chewing tobacco; and to give a $43 million contract to build an ice palace and funicular railway outside of Ashgabat, the capital city. See International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 85 for more details.

Niyazov regime to construct a particularly "Turkmen" identity have their roots in the early Soviet efforts—in style if not entirely in content. The most significant scholarly essays on Turkmen politics have been S. Demidov's book *Postsovetskii Turkmenistan*, which discusses in some detail the political, economic, and cultural programs of the Niyazov regime, Sally Cummings and Michael Ochs' chapter on sultanism in Turkmenistan in Sally Cummings, ed., *Power and Change in Central Asia*, and Annette Bohr's chapter "Independent Turkmenistan: From Post-Communism to Sultanism", in Sally Cummings, ed., *Oil, Transition and Security in Central Asia*, which provides a discussion of the evolution of authoritarianism in this post-Soviet state with particularly reference to sultanism and the social context in which it has historically developed. It is with this line of inquiry that this thesis begins—my intent is to explore the question of sultanism in Turkmenistan and particularly to dive into the historical methods with which sultanistic regimes propagate and continue themselves to assess the extent to which the sultanistic regime typology is salient in examining developments in modern Turkmenistan.

Although they will not contribute to the literature on democratic consolidation, analyses of personalist regimes are valuable in themselves for adding to an understanding of non-democratic governance, and for their contribution to an understanding of the fledgling processes of legitimation and institution building prior to political transition.[4] In order to assess these issues in the context of Turkmenistan, it is important to first understand what kinds of non-democratic regimes have taken shape in Central Asia. An appropriate theoretical beginning for this inquiry may lie in the literature on personalist regimes, and particularly discussions of the development

[4] Or, as may prove to be the case, in the total absence of a transition to democracy which is not only not inevitable, but highly unlikely to occur in the short term for Turkmenistan (discussed later).

and maintenance of neo-patrimonial and sultanistic rule.[5] The richest discussions of personal rule on a large scale exist in the literature on political developments in post-colonial Africa, which uses Weberian concepts to examine legitimacy in the context of newly independent states.

This paper will draw on the benchmark concept of sultanism in describing Niyazov's regime in Turkmenistan. While sultanism's definition is expanded upon in the following chapter, the following five points briefly introduce this regime type—

- Sultanism is the most obviously personalist of the types of non-democratic rule;
- Sultanistic rule is characterized by the weakness of traditional and legal-rational legitimation, and the lack of ideological justification—although sultanistic leaders tend to create so-called "pseudo-ideologies", after their rise to power, to give the appearance of a mission;
- A sultanistic ruler exercises unrestrained power at his own discretion;
- Loyalty to the ruler is generally motivated by a mixture of fear and rewards to regime supporters and;
- Outwardly, sultanism features a pronounced cult of personality and a tendency towards dynasticism.[6]

Following a discussion of personal rule as a system and regime typologies more generally, this thesis will specifically consider methods of legitimation in personalist regimes, introducing a number of concepts that will form the basis of a subsequent analysis of political legitimacy in post-Soviet Turkmenistan. The role of Niyazov's

[5] See John Ishiyama, "Neopatrimonialism and the prospects for democratization in the Central Asian republics," in Sally Cummings (ed) *Power and Change*, p. 43; also H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998).

[6] See Chehabi and Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes*, and chapter 1 of this thesis for more detailed definitions and applications of the concept. Sultanistic rulers also generally monopolize certain economic resources, and rotate bureaucratic officials to ensure that their systems of cronyism do not threaten their leadership.

personality cult in the process of legitimation will be discussed, as will the content of presidential tomes and state- disseminated media, the process of "Turkmenization," and the role of rites, ritual, and public space in legitimating the rule of Turkmenbashy. The thesis will consider the use of ideology or pseudo-ideology as a tool for gaining normative compliance, focusing on the political dynamics of a cult of personality, educational systems under sultanism, and the roles of media and official ritual in obtaining a domain consensus. Following this discussion, the idea of "invented tradition" and the revision of national histories are considered as a foundation for nation building in new states. Finally, the thesis will analyse and consider symbols of power, and particularly architecture and urban design of capital cities as factors of regime legitimation.

This study has three objectives: 1) to situate the case of Turkmenistan in a comparative context, particularly discussing the behaviour of Niyazov's regime with reference to historical examples of sub-Saharan African personalism; 2) to examine the role of so-called "pseudo-ideology" in the legitimation of sultanistic regimes; and 3) to examine different elements of the legitimation effort, namely, media and education, historical revision, and architecture and public space. Turkmenistan's regime exhibits qualities that correspond to the typology of sultanistic rulership, lending it a familiarity that should help scholars and policy-makers in considering the future of this little-understood country. Additionally, an exploration of Niyazov's methods of ideological legitimation will lend insight not only to Turkmenistan's contemporary constructed culture, but also to the perspectives and views of a new, younger generation raised under Niyazov's regime. Sultanistic pseudo-ideology—while not considered an ideology in the traditional sense of the word—can in fact infiltrate and shape daily life in significant ways, both explicit and implicit. In so

doing, sultanistic pseudo-ideology becomes a method of control, not secondary to but parallel to fear and the threat of force. The current political climate in Turkmenistan precludes an academic assessment of the extent of societal acceptance of the regime's doctrine; however, in this case, compliance—and not belief—is in practice the most important factor. The content and methods of the regime's programme of legitimation will comprise the focus of the thesis.

The methodology of this thesis is comprised of a textual analysis of regime-issued literature from Turkmenistan combined with fieldwork conducted on two separate visits to Turkmenistan in 2003 and 2004. The methodological core of this project is a close, interpretive reading of official texts and state-issued daily newspapers from Turkmenistan, drawn from the period following Turkmenistan's independence in 1991 until 2003—including a day-by-day content analysis of the newspaper *Neytralnyy Turkmenistan* over that time period to assess the growth of the cult of leadership in the media. The major Turkmen-language periodicals issued in Turkmenistan include *Turkmenistan*, published six times a week; *Watan*, published three times a week; *Galkynys*, a weekly that is the mouthpiece of the ruling party (the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan); and *Turkmen Dunyasi*, a monthly that is the organ of the Ashgabat-based World Turkmen's Association. Other Turkmen-language papers include *Adalat (Justice)* and *Edebiyat we Sungat (Literature and the Arts)*. The Russian-language *Neytralnyy Turkmenistan* is published six times a week. My inquiry is supplemented by other primary sources drawn from different domains such as presidential speeches and interviews, policy decrees, biographies and pamphlets. Because they are so heavily controlled by the state, however, readings of these texts in Turkmenistan are useful for discerning the official and acceptable state line and, importantly, preferred metaphors and images in support of the regime's

created ideology. My project concerns official attempts at legitimation—therefore, the state line on issues is the object of study.

These textual analyses are invaluably supplemented with discussions and interviews with university students and professors in Turkmenistan, interviews with representatives of international organizations and diplomats, and visits to school classes. Fieldwork in Turkmenistan helped to contextualize and collect documents, although many informal interviews with Turkmenistani citizens were conducted—the realities of research in Turkmenistan prohibit conduction of regimented or representative interviews as a technique. During the course of researching this thesis I visited Ashgabat, Mary, Bayram Ali, Dashoguz, Derbasa and Erbet desert villages, and the mountainous Nohur region along the Iranian border.

Areas of Legitimation Under Sultanistic Regimes: Outline of Study

An examination of the idea of sultanistic rule, which stems from Weber's concept of patrimonial rule, provides a context in which to consider Niyazov's regime in Turkmenistan. This concept has been expanded primarily in works on personal rule, and largely in studies of post-colonial African regimes. In order to gain a more extensive understanding of sultanistic rule, chapter one provides a literature review on post-colonial personalism and the more recent works conceptualizing the sultanistic regime type. A discussion follows on the ways in which Niyazov's regime in contemporary Turkmenistan closely conforms to this paradigm; over time, this regime has exhibited high levels of personalism as well as other qualities of neo-patrimonial rule or sultanism.

The second and third chapters will help to situate the case of contemporary Turkmenistan in a comparative context. Descriptive chronologies facilitate a cross-

regional comparison of governance in post-Soviet Eurasia and post-colonial Africa. Studies of post-colonial African personalism lend a certain amount of insight to the cases of sultanistic or personalist rule that exist in post-Soviet space and may provide clues as to the lasting effects of these systems of rule in the event of regime change.[7]

The fourth chapter expands on the idea of political legitimation under sultanistic regimes. Sultanistic regimes are distinguished from totalitarian regimes and other dictatorships in part by the absence of true ideology. Generally, scholars have asserted, sultanistic regimes are characterized by the development of a sort of pseudo-ideology, which is perhaps not widely believed and serves as mere window dressing for their regime.[8] The absence of a genuine guiding ideology, the factor which best distinguishes it from totalitarianism, drives sultanistic leaders instead to incorporate pseudo- ideologies into their regime; that is, to invent ideologies to substantiate their rule. Much more salient than true ideological backing in cases of sultanistic rule is force or the threat of force, imprisonment or penalty—that is, general fear keeps the population in check. Because the leader acts outside of the rule of law, generally no legal limits inhibit his capability to punish those who betray his regime, and the acquiescence of the older generations tends at first to be based on this fear. Fear, however, is only part of the picture. Younger generations, and even older generations over time, become inundated with the pseudo-ideology of the sultanistic regime and may, in the absence of external contact and information freedom, come to internalize some of the pillars of the regime's historiography and worldview. Through constant exposure to symbols, rhetoric, culture, and history of the regime, people are socialized to believe what they see, and over time may in fact begin to lose points of

[7] Of course, this comparison can only go so far—the social, economic, and historical contexts in Africa and Central Asia probably have as many significant differences as insightful similarities, and scholars must not confuse comparison of regime type and governing style with comparison of the countries as a whole, which is not salient.
[8] See Chehabi and Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes*

comparison. Finally, sultanistic regimes often arise in contexts that support their sustainability, where populations are not familiar with liberal democratic principles, perhaps have a history of domination by strong-handed rulers, and expect little more from their political systems. Political legitimation under sultanism is not just a peripheral issue; it lies at the heart of the regime's perception of itself, its citizens' perceptions of it, and also international critiques of the system.

Sultanistic rulers make no effort to conceal the highly personalized elements of their regimes, and one of the defining features of sultanism is a pronounced cult of personality. Sultanistic rulers tend to be prolific authors of inspired volumes of philosophy and even poetry, and their constructed pseudo-ideologies sometimes bear the ruler's name. This type of legitimating doctrine often "exalts the nation's ancient glories and draws on an 'invented tradition' to demarcate the nation from its neighbors...."[9] A highly developed personality cult should not be confused with ideology in its real sense. Cults of personality in states with unformed national narratives offer leaders the opportunity to "construct or remake national history and identity and, moreover, to reach in to that construction in order to furnish his own authority in the present, and fashion his own perceived place in its destiny."[10]

Pseudo-ideologies and deeply entrenched cults of personality do hold political significance. Lisa Wedeen, in her book *Ambiguities of Domination* explores the political implications of Asad's cult of personality in Syria, arguing that although the regime's rhetoric is often unbelievable and at times patently absurd, Asad's cult remains politically effective because it is a strategy of domination based on

[9] *ibid*., 14

[10] Michael Denison, "Are They Laughing At Us?" Strategies of Compliance and Resistance to the Leadership Cult in Contemporary Turkmenistan, Leeds University, p. 11. A cult, in this sense, can generate "a national space within and beyond the confines of the state in which the ruler becomes indivisible with the state's identity, history, and future." (Denison, 11)

compliance rather than legitimacy.[11] The cult of personality functions as a disciplinary device, and it plays many roles: it "produces guidelines for acceptable speech and behaviour; it defines and generalizes a specific type of national membership; it occasions the enforcement of obedience; it induces complicity by creating practices in which citizens are themselves 'accomplices,' upholding the norms constitutive of Asad's domination; it isolates Syrians from one another; and it clutters public space with monotonous slogans and empty gestures, which tire the minds and bodies of producers and consumers alike."[12]

In addition to, and indeed in support of, his cult of personality, Niyazov has constructed a set of symbols, slogans, and oaths to represent his power. A regime's control and manipulation of the symbolic world can be a powerful instrument of legitimation and demonstration of power. Ritual, which is defined as "a stylized, repetitive social activity which, through the use of symbolism, expresses and defines social relations," is of central importance in Niyazov's regime legitimation.[13] In Turkmenistan, ritual is often found within the context of holidays created in the period since independence. The literature on ritual largely concerns its social control function, although Christel Lane, in her analysis of Soviet ritual, cites also the capacities of ritual to "express and canalize individual emotions... and to satisfy aesthetic needs through utilizing and uniting the creative arts in ritual form."[14] Many forms of political rule have sought legitimacy through encouraging expressions of popular consent. Considerable effort is invested into the mobilization of mass support for regime activity through rallies, demonstrations, marches, and plebiscites.[15] The

[11] Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric, and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 6
[12] Wedeen, 6
[13] Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 11
[14] Lane, 19
[15] A. Heywood, *Political Ideas and Concepts* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994), p. 98

iconography of the state is expressed visually in flags, stamps, coinage, and currency; textually it can be explored in anthems, oaths, and pledges of allegiance. Theatrically, as Young writes, "the state represents itself in resplendent ceremonial: inaugurations and coronations, parades displaying its military might, rituals of national commemoration."[16]

The recurrence of particular political slogans, metaphors, and images raises questions about the nature of political legitimacy in a given cultural context. Michael G. Schatzberg, in his study of eight central African states, explores the language of politics and legitimacy, and the power of metaphor and imagery in new states.[17] In examining the cultural logic of legitimacy, he argues that political legitimacy in many African cases rests on the tacit normative idea that the relationship between ruler and citizen parallels the relationship between father and child. This reflects a pervasive (though largely unarticulated) conception of the political realm and the nation as a highly idealized family. This imagery and language of father and family, pervasive in many parts of the developing world (and indeed, in personal regimes throughout history), seems to strike a resonant cultural chord in Turkmenistan as well. If it is true that familial imagery forms part of a culturally valid comprehension of political legitimacy in Africa, such rhetoric and imagery might play a similar role in post-Soviet Turkmenistan.

The fifth chapter considers the ways in which sultanistic leaders, and Niyazov in particular, construct national narratives and write national histories—— as George Orwell reminds us, "Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the

[16] Crawford Young, *The Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 34
[17] Michael G. Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001)

present controls the past."[18] This topic has been discussed to some extent in consideration of post-colonial Africa; as Tanella Boni writes, "regimes have their writers in the same way that the Kings of Europe once had jesters and the Chiefs of pre-colonial Africa their griots and storytellers."[19] Eric Hobsbawm defined the term "invented tradition" broadly as "a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past."[20] Generally, tradition is invented by regimes in response to novel situations– although this practice is common to almost all polities at various times, it occurs with greater frequency "when a rapid transformation of society weakens or destroys the social patterns for which 'old' traditions had been designed, producing new ones to which they were not applicable... in short, when there are sufficiently large and rapid changes on the demand or the supply side."[21] This was certainly the case at the time of the Soviet Union's collapse, which left the successor states with the task of filling the void left by the withdrawal of Marxism-Leninism as the legitimating ideology. The invention of tradition goes hand-in-hand with historical revision in creating a national narrative with the leader at the center of the nation's past and future.

Nationalist historiography is a tool of most new regimes, because it forms one of the most important pillars of nationalism and is connected with the very definition of nation. Historiography acquired an important role in the post-Soviet successor states after the fall of the Soviet Union. Because the history writing process within

[18] George Orwell, *1984* (New York: Signet Classics, 1950), p. 36
[19] Tanella Boni (an Ivory Coast novelist), cited in Dominic Thomas, *Nation-Building, Propaganda, and Literature in Francophone Africa* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2002), p. 5
[20] Eric Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds. *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 1
[21] Hobsbawm, "Inventing Traditions," 5

the Soviet Union was strictly controlled, academics anticipated a huge deviation in the content and style of history writing in post-Soviet space. To an extent, this occurred—topics were considered in different ways by the newly independent regimes—but history is still being interpreted by regimes to serve their purposes, and in Central Asia we see a revision of history on a large scale. In Turkmenistan, there have been many historical constructions and revisions—from oral histories and travelogues to the Tsarist period, then the Soviet period, and now by the post-Soviet regimes. Even within these periods, large discrepancies and revisions occurred.

In constructing a national narrative, regimes tend to recraft the nation's history and also to reject the "other", thereby strengthening the nation's identity through contrasts. History has been an important tool for nationalists since at least the 18th century—when museums and textbooks, nonexistent in previous centuries, began to play a role in the construction of identities in Europe on a wide scale. The idea of national history came after the idea of the nation, which was based on the concept of ethnic community—and an important element of an ethnic community tended to be some sense of common memory, along with common myths of origin, culture, solidarity, language, religion, and other characteristics. A national history is a tailored discourse to institute a particular historical memory and its corresponding "amnesia"—that is, ignorance of unattractive pieces of the past. This is a common tool of regimes to provide legitimacy for integrated territory, taking history as a unifying force.[22]

Architecture, another forum for expressions of power, forms the subject of the sixth chapter. Crawford Young discusses the importance of architecture and symbols:

States tackle the task of transforming their mundane reality

[22] Touraj Atabaki lecture at Central European University, course "History and Nationalism in Central Asia," Budapest, July 2005

> into symbolic splendour with remarkable ingenuity. In the monumental architecture of their capital cities, states affix the signature of power. These often magnificent structures evoke awe and admiration and encode the core values of the polity: the evocation of classical Greece with its democratic overtones in the United States Capitol building; the opulent splendour of the absolutist monarchy in the Palace of Versailles; the remote majesty of Imperial China in the Forbidden City of Beijing; the despotic power of the state in the fortress towers of the Kremlin.[23]

In his book *Architecture, Power, and National Identity*, Lawrence Vale explores the interplay among architecture, culture, and politics in several postcolonial states.[24] Not merely architecture, but also the design and layout of public space, can be significant as a reflection of various political agendas, and nowhere is this more visible than in the construction (or reconstruction) of capital cities. Capital cities are generally where political life meets urbanism, and the layout of such cities can say a lot about the methods of a regime's control. Colonial rule transformed many cities (for example, in British Egypt or French Morocco) from traditional urban settings to cities that lent themselves to a Western European conception of space—broad boulevards, central capital complexes (in the case of Cairo) or side-by-side traditional and colonial cities (as in Morocco) have come to represent the methods of colonialism as forwarded in agendas of architecture and urban design.

In newly independent countries emerging from periods of colonial domination, observers note not only the legacy of the colonial power in the design of urban centres, but also the actions taken by the new regimes in the post-colonial periods. In many cases, the new regimes adopt the old cities in their present state; sometimes they are altered quite significantly; in other cases, we see the abandoning

[23] Young, *Colonial State,* 34
[24] Lawrence Vale, *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992)
[1] Robert H. Jackson and Carl G. Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: The University of California Press, 1982), p. 5

of the old colonial capital and the creation of a new capital city in an entirely different location, either atop an existing town or the building of a capital from scratch. All of these approaches speak to the motivations and intentions, and maybe also the resources and priorities, of the post-colonial regime, and studying the location and development of capital cities in post-colonial states involves the peeling back of the layers of historical governance and design and the analysis of each layer as a representation of political control.

Through these varying levels of analysis, this thesis aims to enrich the academic understanding of post-Soviet Turkmenistan, in particular the methods of legitimation under its current sultanistic regime. References to historical regimes in post-colonial Africa will not only situate Turkmenistan in a rich comparative context, but hopefully will also further the general comparisons between the two regions as part of other scholars' ongoing research, notably on dysfunctional authority across post-colonial space. It is my hope that scholars and policymakers alike will attempt to better understand the political climate and its lasting effects on society in this under-studied, yet strategically and culturally significant, country.

CHAPTER ONE

Personal Rule, Neopatrimonialism, and Sultanism

Before tailoring this discussion to Turkmenistan, conceptual clarity must proceed from a review of the relevant literature on the nature and types of non-democratic regimes. This chapter will review the major contributions to the body of work on regime typology, including the ideal typification of totalitarianism, post-totalitarianism, authoritarianism, and various forms of personalism including patrimonial rule and sultanism. The analysis of regime type in Turkmenistan will draw particularly on the literature exploring political developments in post-colonial Africa.

Experiences of the African states that emerged from the withdrawal of the European powers in the mid-twentieth century can lend a huge amount of insight to scholars of contemporary Central Asia. While colonialism in Africa and the period of Soviet rule in Central Asia differed in many ways, these experiences share certain characteristics that make cross-regional comparisons useful. Most significantly, both sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia emerged from periods of foreign domination as newly independent states charged in many cases for the first time in their history with the construction of systems of self- governance on a national level.

In their study of personal rule as a system, Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg suggest that in general, "personal regimes may be thought of as typical of transitional periods, when one institutionalized order has broken down and another has not yet replaced it."[1] Clearly, however, not every state undergoing political transition is subject to the caprices of personalist governance—what makes the difference? Jackson and Rosberg suggest that a "pertinent condition for personal rule may be an absence of a relevant and viable

institutional tradition in the political life of a state."[2] In Africa's post-colonial period, the absence of unifying indigenous institutions left politicians with "the task of governing with their personal power and authority."[3] This thesis will examine if, and why, the same was true for Turkmenistan as it emerged for the first time as an independent state in 1991.

Regimes, and in the case of personalist regimes, the ruler, are of central importance to this thesis. In Turkmenistan, as in many other countries in the developing world, strongman politics appears as "a fascinating kind of politics, perhaps the most fascinating– as Machiavelli showed in *The Prince*– for it is largely contingent upon men, upon their interests and ambitions, their desires and aversions, their hopes and fears, and all other predispositions that the political animal is capable of exhibiting and projecting upon political life."[4] Specifically of concern are the elements of personal rule that are central to legitimation efforts — nationalism and national identity as they factor into the formulation of state ideology. Here, certain terms used throughout this thesis will be clarified—terms that are often interchanged and confused in discussions of systems of governance.

- **Leadership.** This study concerns political leadership and leadership mechanisms, in a broad sense. While no single definition of political leadership exists, many of them include ideas of power, personality, environment, behaviour and roles, and institutional structures. For the purposes of this thesis, it is useful to view leadership in terms of a "regime," a concept discussed in turn. Answers to the questions of leadership involve inquiry into a regime's methods and degree of social control and mobilization, ideological or other claims to legitimacy, political and administrative

[2] Jackson and Rosberg, 22
[3] *ibid.*
[4] *ibid.*, x

structure and level of pluralism, and discussion of the goals it seeks to attain. Academic distinctions have been made between leaders and power-holders (or office-holders),[5] but here, this definition will suffice: leadership operates in a different way than the holding of an office; "It is a form of power– a special form of power... since it is exercised by one individual over a large group and, in the case of the national political leadership, over a very large group. Leadership is therefore an intrinsically highly inegalitarian relationship.... One can therefore define national political leadership as the power exercised by an individual to push members of the polity towards action in a particular direction."[6] Blondel has developed a two-dimensional typology of political leadership according to the scope for change in a polity and the extent to which leaders seek change.[7] Leadership should also be conceived of with regard to the type of relationship between a leader and a society; this aspect will be discussed below with reference to Max Weber's typology of legitimate rule.

- **Regime.** This chapter will outline various typologies of non-democratic regimes with particular regard for those that exhibit characteristics of personal rule. As we will see, particularly in the literature on post-colonial Africa, scholars define "regime" in various ways. In discussions of personal rule, the terms "regime" and "leadership style" are often used interchangeably, resulting in conceptual confusion.

[5] Burns, 1978, cited in J. Blondel, *Comparative Government: An Introduction* (London: Prentice Hall, 1995), p. 289
[6] Blondel, 290, emphasis in original
[7] Other typologies of leaders will follow in my discussion of the literature on African personalist regimes; Blondel's category of "Paternalists/Populists," which includes Bismark, Stalin, the Shah, and many Third World leaders, is the most useful for my inquiry, although it does not draw the finer distinctions that can be found in Linz and Stepan's classification of non-democratic regimes and Jackson and Rosberg's categorizations of personal rulers in Africa.

The term "regime" is generally taken to describe the rules of the political game, its institutions, and its relations with the broader society– regimes are "typically less permanent than states but more permanent than governments."[8] Measures and policies pursued in the name of a regime are not necessarily congruent with state interests. This thesis adopts Juan Linz's widely applied definition of a regime as "the patterns of allocation, use, and abuse of power in a polity."[9] Under Linz's conception, regimes may be understood in terms of power, institutions, leaders and legitimacy. Regime change can be said to have occurred when "The legitimating ideology and basic rules of the political game were altered in fundamental ways," as in a process of revolution, decolonization, or in less dramatic ways.[10]

- **Power.** The question of the nature of power is a "crucial category for political theory, yet it is a very elusive one."[11] Power can be conceived of as an ability to achieve a desired outcome (often referred to as "power to"), or as a relationship or the exercise of control by one person over another (or, as "power over"). Max Weber defined power as "the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests."[12] For the purposes of this thesis, power is taken to be the capacity to make decisions that are in some fashion binding upon

[8] Sally Cummings, *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 3
[9] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule," in Chehabi and Linz, ed., *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998, pp. 3-25), p. 10
[10] Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 41
[11] Cummings, 3-4
[12] Also in Michael Schatzberg, *Political Legitimacy in Middle Africa: Father, Family, Food* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 39

others.[13]

- **Authority.** Power is often thought of together with authority. In its broadest sense, authority is a type of power; "it is a means through which one person can influence the behaviour of another."[14] There is a distinction between the two, however—whereas power can be defined as the ability to influence the behaviour of another, "authority can be understood as the (legitimate and accepted) right to do so. Power brings about compliance through persuasion, pressure, threats, coercion or violence. Authority, on the other hand, is based upon a perceived 'right to rule' and brings about compliance through a moral obligation on the part of the ruled to obey."[15] Max Weber, whose sociology of legitimate authority forms the basis for many contemporary discussions of personalist rule, treats authority as a form of power. Authority, in his view, is "legitimate power," or power cloaked in legitimacy. Under this view, "a government that is obeyed can be said to exercise authority, even though that obedience may have been brought about by systematic indoctrination and propaganda."[16] Even in this Weberian sense, however, authority can be distinguished from various manifestations of power. Heywood writes, "If authority involves the right to influence others, while power refers to the ability to do so, the exercise of power always draws upon some kind of resources. In other words, power involves the ability to either reward or punish another. This applies whether

[13] "Influence", by contrast, is taken as "the ability to affect the content of these decisions through some form of external pressure, highlighting the fact that formal and binding decisions are not made in a vacuum." (A. Heywood, *Political Ideas and Concepts* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994), p. 79)
[14] Heywood, 86
[15] *ibid*.
[16] In Heywood, 86

power takes the form of pressure, intimidation, coercion or violence."[17] Weber's influential categorization of types of authority is discussed in detail below.

- **Institutions.** States and regimes alike are generally understood and classified with some reference to the institutions that comprise them. The classical understanding of institutions, as "impersonal system[s] of rules and offices that effectively bind the conduct of individuals involved in them," has evolved in political science,[18] and Blondel suggests that the generic term "institution" can be taken to describe the elements of a political system, such as legislatures, parties, or groups. He writes, "The political system operates essentially through and by institutions; they are in effect the pieces of the machinery."[19] For the purposes of this thesis, an institution is best understood as a combination of rules and behaviour, allowing for a separation between the concepts of abstract institutions and realized institutions, a useful dichotomy for an analysis of personal rule. Whereas many personalist non-democratic regimes have abstract institutions (constitutions, assemblies, and so on), few abide by these written rules. When the term "institutions" is used here with reference to Turkmenistan, it refers to the idea of these abstract institutions. As Jackson and Rosberg write of Africa, in Turkmenistan too "the formal rules of the political game do not effectively govern the conduct of rulers and other political leaders in most places most of the time. Insofar as African rulers follow rules, it is only after they have been changed by the ruler or oligarchy in question to suit his or their personal-political convenience. But rules of expediency are not, patently, rules

[17] *ibid*., 87
[18] Jackson and Rosberg, 10
[19] Blondel, 10

of institutional government."[20] The question of whether institutionalization can be said to exist in states with systems of highly personalized rule will be addressed below.

- **Legitimacy.** Legitimacy, often defined simply as "rightfulness," is crucial to the distinction between authority and power.[21] The concept of political legitimacy is a complex one, and generally is used descriptively to indicate acceptance by the ruled of the ruler's authority. Legitimacy is "the quality which transforms naked power into rightful authority; it confers upon an order or command an authoritative or binding character, ensuring that it is obeyed out of duty rather than because of fear."[22] Weber, again, presents one of the most influential conceptions of this term: he takes legitimacy to refer to a belief in the "right to rule." In this understanding, "providing its peoples are prepared to comply, a system of rule can be described as legitimate."[23] This differs markedly from moralistic considerations of legitimacy that suggest a clear, objective line to divide legitimate and illegitimate forms of rule. David Beetham, in *The Legitimation of Power*, addresses the question of how legitimacy is brought about in order to take legitimacy out of the hands of the powerful (where, it is argued, Weberian conceptions had placed it). He proposes three conditions for legitimacy of power: first, the exercise of power according to established rules; second, the justification of these rules under shared beliefs of governors and governed; and finally, there must be an expression of consent on the

[20] Jackson and Rosberg, 11
[21] Heywood, 95
[22] *ibid*.
[23] cited in Heywood, 96

part of the governed.[24] Legitimacy should not be confused with legality, although the two ideas are connected. Blondel writes, "Cases abound of legal regimes which are not, or have ceased to be, legitimate because they no longer enjoy support: tsarist Russia at the time of the First World War is an example. There are also regimes that enjoy support without being legal, or at any rate without yet being legalized.... In most situations, however, legality helps to increase legitimacy because many will support the political system for the reason that it is legal."[25] Legitimacy might take the form of legality, political integration (that is, the support given by institutions and groups such as political parties), and popular support. Legitimacy stems from individual support, whether direct or indirect, passive or active; in Blondel's conception "where positive and passive support exceeds negative reactions, the regime can be said to be relatively legitimate; the greater the difference in favour of positive support, the higher the amount of legitimacy. Blondel suggests that coercion might also be a basis of legitimacy, and that coercion and support must been seen in combination– historical examples of dictatorship, according to Blondel, demonstrate that "coercion can be a substitute for support in many circumstances despite the claim that dictatorships might not be viable."[26]

- **Legitimation.** Useful in examination of Turkmenistan is the concept of legitimation. Legitimation, an idea that will be explored in some detail for the Turkmen case, is "the idea of creating legitimacy artificially."[27] Under Beetham's

[24] David Beetham, *The Legitimation of Power* (1991), in Heywood, 96
[25] J. Blondel, *Comparative Government: An Introduction* (London: Prentice Hall, 1995), p. 62
[26] *ibid*., 63
[27] Blondel, 64

conception, legitimacy is only conferred upon regimes that rule with popular consent; however, there is general agreement that many, if not all, regimes "attempt to manufacture legitimacy by manipulating what their citizens know, think or believe. In effect, legitimacy may simply be a form of ideological hegemony or dominance."[28] Legitimation is one of the backbones of a state—as Gramsci notes, "even though its hegemony serves a ruling class, others generally defer to the state's power and consent to its authority because its domination is clothed in some legitimating ideology. The generally diffused image of the state includes affective symbols, legitimating myths, a theory of its origins, processes, and ultimate ends."[29] Crawford Young considers legitimation to be a primary component of the operational code of the state. He writes, "Weber with good reason places patterns of legitimation at the core of his notion of the state; absent this property, the state is in a condition of extreme vulnerability. Hegemony is rendered credible by the visible possession of superior force. However, coercion may well be conceived of metaphorically as a gold reserve underpinning the currency of power. If constantly employed, the reserves are emptied in short order, and rapid devolution of power itself soon follows."[30] In its most basic form, legitimation is developed through official propaganda and state ideologies—Young writes, "Ideology as an expression of the ultimate aims and final source of authority plays a critical role…. The common theme is an interwoven corpus of ideas that provide a vision of the future

[28] Heywood, 96
[29] Gramsci, cited by Young and Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p. 14
[30] Young, *Colonial State*, 37

and a yardstick for measuring the present."[31] Other methods of legitimation will be discussed below with particular reference to personalist regimes. Turkmenistan's current regime has undertaken a comprehensive program of legitimation, propagating a well-developed pseudo-ideology to provide justification for its power. This program will form the subject of inquiry for this thesis.

Totalitarian, Post-Totalitarian, and Authoritarian Regimes: Ideal Types

Regime classification is a useful academic tool; typologies bring to light patterns that emerge from various types of leadership. Political regimes in the contemporary period have been generally classified first as authoritarian or democratic, and then classified as a subtype of one or the other of these. Regime type is separate from efficacy of governance– various types of political regimes can perform equally well (or equally poorly) on policy matters such as economic growth, the distribution of income, and the provision of public services. Indeed, the extensive literature "probing the effects of regime type on policy performance reaches no firm conclusions about whether political democracy promotes or inhibits economic growth and income equality."[32] In the modern context, non-democratic regime types generally take the form of a dictatorship by a political party or a military, rather than leadership of a chief or monarch, and these regimes have been the focus of large amounts of inquiry in the mid- and late-twentieth century.[33] This chapter proceeds with a review of some of the literature on descriptive theories of ideal typical non-democratic

[31] *ibid.*, 38
[32] Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 12
[33] Paul Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes: Theory, Government and Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 2

regimes as chosen by Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, namely totalitarianism, post-totalitarianism, and authoritarianism—their fourth ideal type is the idea of sultanism.[34] This prompts a discussion of Linz's concept of "sultanism" and its place in the literature on personal rule more generally.

The mass of literature on non-democratic regimes in the twentieth century has its roots in the study of totalitarianism, an extreme form of one-party rule that emerged in various forms in Europe during the 1920s-1930s. Hitler and Stalin are the preeminent examples of totalitarian dictators in the twentieth century, and arguably history's only true examples of totalitarianism (although Mussolini is included in some accounts).[35] As Barry Rubin writes in his work on modern dictatorship, "Although dictatorship is a very old form of government, these... regimes, with their regimented parties, mass rallies, concentration camps, and passionate promotion of hatred, represented something quite different from the forms of government of most states since the first civilizations were established by the empires of kings and generals. Before the twentieth century, political legitimacy in tightly controlled societies was generally through conquest, inheritance, or religious authority. However, under the twentieth-century fascist and communist systems, new modes of mobilization produced even more effective ways to obtain and keep power in a modern

[34] Linz and Stepan's ideal types are one set among many; debates about how best to classify political systems are unsettled in the literature. Jean Blondel, to cite another comprehensive classification scheme, cites egalitarian-authoritarian, traditional inegalitarian, and authoritarian-inegalitarian political systems as three types of illiberal rule. *Dictatorship*, he suggests, is a regime without sufficient support that needs to rely on coercion. For my purposes, Linz and Stepan's system of classification is instructive as it places particular emphasis on personalized rule in the sultanistic form, a more nuanced approach to the idea of "dictatorship". Juan J. Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*, (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)

[35] B. Rubin, *Modern Dictators: Third World Coup Makers, Strongmen, and Populist Tyrants*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company), 1987), p. 37

context."[36] The study of totalitarianism became prominent in Western political science by the 1950s, incorporating not only the fascist ideologies of Italy and Nazi Germany, but also the Soviet regime. Hannah Arendt, Carl J. Friedrich, and Z. K. Brzezinski were among the first major theorists of totalitarianism, claiming that this form of government was a quite novel and total form of dictatorship.[37]

Linz and Alfred Stepan have selected four aspects of regimes that they use to categorize their four ideal-type regimes: pluralism, leadership, ideology, and mobilization. Their rubric of classification allows for ease of comparison among various forms of non-democratic regime. Under totalitarian regimes, the official party has a complete monopoly of power both by law and in practice, and there exists no economic, social, or political pluralism. There is "no space for second economy or parallel society."[38] Totalitarian leadership demonstrates a large degree of unpredictability and exercises power with undefined limits; it is often in its early stages a charismatic leadership, and recruitment to the high ranks depends on commitment and success at earlier stages within the totalitarian party organization. As Arendt and Linz emphasize in earlier works, totalitarian ideology is a distinguishing characteristic of this regime type. Under a totalitarian regime, there is an

[36] *ibid*., 39

[37] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (London: Ruskin House, 1958), 463. In her classic 1951 work, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt called totalitarian rule "a new and extreme form of dictatorship," with Hitler and Stalin its only two embodiments. A major component of totalitarian rule, she suggests, is ideology– a phenomenon that was never used to its potential before 20th century totalitarianism (Arendt, 468). She also highlights the significance of the secret police organizations. But the key and most distinctive structural feature, for Arendt, is the functionally indispensable leader figure– the Stalin or Hitler. Carl J. Friedrich and Z. K. Brzezinski's 1956 *Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy*, a more detailed and widely applicable theory than Arendt's original work, described totalitarianism as "an extreme, ideologically driven and terror-ridden form of dictatorship. The regime's ideology is the ultimate source of the goals that the totalitarians seek to attain through a political, social, cultural and economic revolution. (Quoted in Brooker, 14)" They claim that character of totalitarian dictatorship could be found in a syndrome of six interrelated features: an ideology, a single party, typically led by one person, a terroristic police, a communications monopoly, a weapons monopoly, and a centrally-directed economy.

[38] Linz and Stepan, 45

"elaborate and guiding ideology that articulates a reachable utopia," one that lends legitimation and a sense of mission to individuals and groups within the regime and society.[39] This ideology forms the basis for an extensive popular mobilization into a variety of state-created organizations that emphasize active citizenship. The concept of totalitarian regime– as an ideal type– has enduring utility. European totalitarians, many suggest, may never return as such; however, a study of totalitarianism holds lasting lessons for political science. Rubin has written that the European totalitarian leaders (particularly Hitler and Stalin) inspired "modern dictators" in the Third World.[40] The point, for modern dictators, was that leadership should not be based on repression and fear alone– although totalitarian rulers used those tools with "previously undreamed of efficiency."[41] Political success required "material benefits, pride in national strength, and a sense of legitimacy to a sizable proportion of the population."[42]

After Stalin's death in 1953 the utility of the classification "totalitarian" came into question. Soviet-type regimes no longer conformed strictly to the totalitarian model, and the number of countries that were attempting to create totalitarian regimes was in decline. This change created conceptual confusion.[43] There appeared to be a new regime type emerging from the routinization, decay, or elite fears of a totalitarian regime. The distinctive features of post-Stalinist polities, namely the fact that the systems more closely resembled

[39] *ibid*.
[40] While the most immediate source of inspiration for contemporary dictators is local history and tradition, and this in part explains the variation in ideology and style of developing-world dictators, Rubin suggests that modern dictators share similar techniques of rule, many of which, he suggested, were learned during the era of European totalitarianism. Rubin writes, "Future Third World leaders were seeking not a total philosophy of life– they already had their own cultures and histories– but a blueprint able to win them political power and to guide economic development." Stalin and Hitler, despite the brutality of their regimes, offered insights: these regimes effectively suppressed the truth at home, and filled the ensuing void with regime propaganda.
[41] Rubin, 47
[42] *ibid*.
[43] Linz and Stepan, 41

bureaucratic politics than pluralistic politics, prompted Linz and Stepan to construct a distinctive post-totalitarian regime type. They justified creation of a new category "because on each of the four dimensions of regime type– pluralism, ideology, leadership, and mobilization– there can be a post-totalitarian ideal type that is different from a totalitarian, authoritarian, or democratic ideal type."[44]

Under a post-totalitarian regime, Linz and Stepan argue, there is a much more "important and complex play of institutional pluralism within the state" than under totalitarianism.[45] Social pluralism also reaches a more significant level– this might be evidenced by the underground dissemination of *samizdat* literature during the post-Stalin Soviet years. Limits to this pluralism, particularly in the political realm, distinguish it from growing pluralism under an authoritarian regime. In the category of leadership, also, post-totalitarianism can be distinguished both from totalitarianism and authoritarianism. Post-totalitarian leadership remains restricted to the revolutionary movement; however, there is a greater level of bureaucracy, supplanting the charismatic nature of the totalitarian leader. Ideologically, a post-totalitarian regime is still officially guided by the revolutionary ideology, which is very much a part of the social reality. There is, however, a waning commitment to the utopian vision as compared with totalitarianism in its pure form. There is, Linz and Stepan suggest, a "shift of emphasis from ideology to programmatic consensus that presumably is based on rational decision-making and limited debate without too much reference to ideology."[46] As a result of the weakening of the state ideology, there is

[44] *ibid.*, 41-42. Other scholars such as Friedrich and Brzezinski, however, would retain use of the totalitarian label beyond 1953 in the Soviet case, as would Schapiro.
[45] Linz and Stepan, 43
[46] *ibid.*, 45

simultaneously a "Progressive loss of interest by leaders and nonleaders involved in organizing mobilization. Routine mobilization of population within state- sponsored organizations to achieve a minimum degree of conformity and compliance. Many 'cadres' and 'militants' are mere careerists and opportunists. Boredom, withdrawal, and ultimately privatization of population's values become an accepted fact."[47] The wide array of regime-sponsored institutions that once served as mobilizational vehicles, still dominate associational culture, but they have lost intensity. Membership may continue due to its obligatory nature, but it will no longer generate popular enthusiasm.

The seminal work on authoritarianism, Linz's 1964 article, "An Authoritarian Regime: Spain," described the distinctive nature of the authoritarian regime type, a concept that dominated late twentieth-century comparative politics. Linz defined the regime type as describing political systems with "limited, not responsible, political pluralism, without elaborate and guiding ideology, but with distinctive mentalities, without extensive or intensive political mobilization, except at some points in their development, and in which a leader or occasionally a small group exercises power within formally ill-defined limits but actually quite predictable ones." In his study of Spain, Linz gave prominence to military dictatorships, suggesting that the military enjoys a privileged position under most authoritarian regimes.

The authoritarian classification has widespread utility. Whereas before scholars had focused on the democratic and totalitarian typologies, in the mid-twentieth century it became increasingly apparent that more regimes were authoritarian than were totalitarian or

[47] *ibid.*, 45

democratic combined. Authoritarian regimes were thus the "modal category of regime type in the modern world." In addition, authoritarian regimes were not necessarily in transition to a different type of regime. As Linz's studies of 1950s and early 1960s Spain demonstrated, the four distinctive dimensions of an authoritarian regime– limited pluralism, mentality, somewhat constrained leadership, and weak mobilization– could "cohere for a long period as a reinforcing and integrated system that was relatively stable."[48] Authoritarianism is taken as a predominant category– Linz and Stepan write, "it turns out that more than 90 percent of modern non-democratic regimes would have to share the same typological space– 'authoritarian.'"[49]

Linz provides a description of the four characteristics of authoritarian rule in some detail. First, limited political pluralism meant that the existence of some groups with some independent political influence is a crucial element of authoritarianism–there is often some room for "semi- opposition". There is often extensive economic and social pluralism, which had its roots in society before the regime's establishment.[50] Second, the authoritarian regime has a leader (or sometimes a small group) whose power falls within predictable norms: there is a tendency for "the regime to co-opt much of the leadership from groups that have some power, presence, and legitimacy that does not derive directly from the regime itself. Indeed, powerful fragments of the pre-existing society have often captured the authoritarian regime. In some authoritarian regimes, even access to top positions can be established not by political loyalties as much as by some degree of professional and technical expertise and some degree of competition through examinations that are open to

[48] *ibid*., 39
[49] *ibid*., 39
[50] *ibid*., 45

the society as a whole."[51] Generally, an authoritarian regime does not find legitimation in a guiding ideology; indeed, a significant feature of authoritarianism is the absence of an elaborate legitimating ideology, although Linz suggests that authoritarianism does have distinctive mentalities.[52] Generally, mobilization is absent or present at very low levels at most points in the regime's development. Most authoritarian regimes "never develop complex, all-inclusive networks of association whose purpose is the mobilization of the population."[53] Authoritarian rule, a concept used to describe many contemporary non-democratic regimes, seems to fall short in capturing the essence of Turkmenistan's current regime, which is much more leader-centric, leaves less room for opposition and pluralism, and allows for more eccentric, discretionary decision-making.

Personal Rule: Weber and Modern Adaptations

Linz and Stepan's final regime type, sultanism, falls under the broader classification of personalist regimes that will form the core discussion of this thesis. Max Weber, in his sociology of leadership, introduced concepts that have continued relevance today. Particularly salient are his considerations of charismatic and patrimonial domination, which

[51] *ibid*., 47
[52] *ibid*., 45
[53] Linz and Stepan, 39. In 1973, Guillermo O'Donnell followed Linz's original study of Spain with his own description of Latin American authoritarian regimes in *Modernization and Bureaucratic Authoritarianism: Studies in South American Politics*. O'Donnell used Linz's definition of authoritarian rule as a basis for a narrower theory and typology, producing a work more coherent and systematic than Linz's general theory. O'Donnell suggested that there are three types of authoritarianism: traditional, populist, and bureaucratic. A traditional authoritarian regime has a low level of modernization (such as Stroessner's regime in Paraguay); a populist regime has medium levels of modernization (such as Peron in Argentina); and a bureaucratic authoritarian regime, the focus of O'Donnell's study, enjoys high levels of modernization. O'Donnell, like Linz, focuses on the military component of this type of rule, but this is largely due to his selection of cases. The features of bureaucratic authoritarianism are the key role of large public bureaucracies (military and civil service) and private bureaucracies (such as business corporations) and also the attempts of technocrats and government to control social sectors through encapsulation.

have suggested points of departure for many scholars of personalist rule and patrimonialism. Both H. E. Chehabi and Linz, who have compiled the most comprehensive collection on the sultanistic regime type, and Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, who developed a typology of personal rule in sub-Saharan Africa based largely on leadership style, to a large extent draw upon Weber's typology of legitimate domination. This section will first outline Weber's original concepts, then trace the ideas of patrimonialism and sultanism as they have been developed by Linz and separately by scholars of African post-colonialism.

Weber's Typology of Legitimate Rule

In his sociological and political writings, Max Weber provides a series of typological and analytical concepts that are useful in "understanding contemporary political systems, particularly those in transition from tradition to modernity in the non-Western world."[54] Non-democratic regimes, which form the basis of this analysis, can be considered legitimate regimes if we accept Weber's contention that "political legitimacy is grounded in the beliefs of those who are governed. If the masses believe that their rulers are legitimate, for whatever reason, then those rulers are legitimate.... Weber argued that, even when democratic procedures for legally removing an incumbent are absent, some political regimes are still regarded as legitimate by their populations."[55] Weber, in discussing how is it that a leader can give a command and have his actions carried out, classified claims to legitimacy in the exercise of authority. With the exception of enslavement, he asserted,

[54] Juan J. Linz, *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p. 144-145
[55] Cummings, 15

people entered into one of three kinds of leader/follower relations– that is, three types of political legitimacy: legal- rational, traditional, and charismatic.

Legal-rational or bureaucratic legitimacy rests on a belief in the legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands.[56] In this ideal-typical leader/follower relationship, the leader is subject to strict and systematic discipline and control in the conduct of the office. Rules regulate the conduct of an office, and administrative staff is separated from the owners of a means of production.[57] The advantages of this type of legitimacy, wrote Weber, lie largely in the system's capability to attain the highest degree of efficiency, and its tendency toward levelling social classes. Legitimacy that is based on charisma rests on belief in the extraordinary powers or qualities of a leader, devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him. Weber defined charisma as "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional power and qualities."[58] Weber's third type, traditional authority, rests on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them. Under this system, legitimacy and power are handed down and can be exercised in arbitrary ways. Offices are held by virtue of traditional status and through patrimony, and promotion is by the arbitrary grace of the chief. Obligations of obedience

[56] Max Weber, *Economy and Society,* ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), p. 339
[57] *ibid*., 338
[58] Brooker, 52

under this system are based on personal loyalty (kinship, slaves, or dependents), and the traditional exercise of authority is only limited by resistance aroused in the subjects.[59]

Weber's original typology, written close to his death in 1920, was very concerned with the personalist aspect of rule– although none of Weber's three types in particular was labelled "personal". However, "he pointed to how the impersonal nature of the legal-rational type of legitimate rule contrasted with the personalist nature of the other two types."[60] Weber, in his discussions of leadership, defined two basic subtypes of personal rule: charismatic and traditional-personal domination. In the case of the patrimonial subtype of traditional legitimacy, "obedience is owed to the person of the chief" or monarch, and in the case of charismatic legitimacy the leader is obeyed by virtue of personal trust in him.

Patrimonialism, a term which recurs in contemporary literature on sultanism and personal rule, is in Weber's conception a subtype of the traditional type of legitimate rule. A patrimonial system is defined as any form of political domination or authority based on personal and bureaucratic power exerted by a royal household. It applies in situations where power is formally arbitrary and administration is under the direct control of the ruler.[61] In an oft-cited passage, Weber explains,

> Patrimonialism and, in the extreme case, sultanism tend to arise whenever traditional domination develops an administration and a military force which are purely personal instruments of the master.... Where domination is primarily traditional, even though it is exercised by virtue of the ruler's personal autonomy, it will be called patrimonial authority; where indeed it operates primarily on the basis of discretion, it will be called sultanism.... Sometimes it appears that sultanism is completely unrestrained by tradition, but this is never in fact the case.

[59] Weber, 335
[60] Brooker, 52
[61] See Ben Stavis notes on Weber's Patrimonial System, available online at http://astro.temple.edu/~bstavis/courses/442patrimonial-system.htm.

> The non- traditional element is not, however, rationalized in impersonal terms, but consists only in an extreme development of the ruler's discretion. It is this which distinguishes it from every form of rational authority.[62]

Neopatrimonialism in Sub-Saharan Africa

Weber's concept of patrimonialism has been adopted and expanded by contemporary scholars seeking to describe modern personalist regimes, particularly in the literature on post-colonial Africa, a prominent feature of which is the intense and pervasive personalization of politics. However, parts of Weber's classification of patrimonialism as a type of traditional rule has been problematic for scholars– for example, is it possible to classify a first-generation regime as a type of "traditional" rulership drawing on "traditional legitimacy"? In his study of African regimes, Aristide R. Zolberg loosened the concept of traditional legitimacy to describe, "a legitimacy based either on the notion 'this is how things have always been', or on what he termed a 'past-orientation'– such as the official party's past glories."[63] Tradition, in Africa, need not refer exclusively to pre-European kingdoms and tribal customs. He writes, "Many political institutions created during the colonial period have become, in the eyes of living men, part of the natural order of things: district commissioners, provincial commissioners, commandants and governors are offices hallowed by times; the African occupants of these offices derive their authority from the fact that they are legitimate successors to the original charismatic founders."[64]

Patrimonialism was separated from traditional legitimacy altogether by Guenther Roth, who suggested that there might be two types of patrimonialism– traditionalist

[62] In Chehabi and Linz 1, 4
[63] Brooker, 54
[64] Aristide Zolberg, *Creating Political Order: The Party States in West Africa* (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966), p. 144

patrimonial regimes (for example, the Ethiopian monarchy in the 1960s) and personal rule "on the basis of loyalties that do not require any belief in the ruler's unique personal qualification." Roth's detraditionalized, personalized patrimonialism is labelled "personal rulership" and he claims it to be based on personal loyalties linked to material rewards and incentives.[65] Personal rulership, he emphasized, is separate from both charismatic and legal-bureaucratic leadership in the Weberian sense: "personal patrimonial regimes differ from charismatic rulership in that the patrimonial ruler need have neither personal charismatic appeal nor a sense of mission; they differ from legal-rational bureaucracies in that neither constitutionally regulated legislation nor advancement on the basis of training and efficiency need be predominant in public administration."[66] Roth additionally adopted Weber's term "sultanism" and used it to described the "highly centralized variant of personal governance" that allows a ruler maximum discretion in almost every aspect of leadership.[67]

There has been a strong tendency towards the emergence of patrimonial, personalist regimes in newly independent states. Roth's conception of patrimonialism, however, left open the question of the uniqueness of patrimonialism in new states (as opposed to patrimonialism as a trend in established regimes, whether totalitarian or pluralistic). Patrimonial structures, and the personalization of office, may occur with some frequency under many types of regime; however, the structures of governance in new states may give staying power to such regimes. Jean-Claude Willame, in his study of patrimonial politics in

[65] Guenther Roth, "Personal Rulership, Patrimonialism, and Empire-Building in the New States," *World Politics* 20:2 (Jan. 1968), p. 196
[66] Roth, 196
[67] Brooker, 54

the Congo, draws attention to the variance in types of structure in industrialized states, versus those in newly formed states. He writes,

> In developed countries, established political and governmental hierarchies, advanced industrial organizations, and sophisticated communications networks all combine to produce a highly integrated society by which the effects of patrimonialism are quite easily diffused. In the new nations, patrimonialism implies not only personalistic leadership in government, but a type of social relationship that makes itself felt everywhere. This relationship arises where authority is dispersed, the scope of government activity limited, and intense power politics often the only channel of social mobility.[68]

In contemporary political science the term *neo*patrimonialism has held greater conceptual currency than patrimonialism. Patrimonial systems are those in which the chief executive maintains his position "through personal patronage, rather than… law."[69] According to Gero Erdmann, the simplest way to define neopatrimonialism is as a mixed system, where elements of "patrimonial and rational-bureaucratic rule co-exist and are sometimes interwoven."[70] Michael Bratton and Nicholas Van de Walle highlight that "the characteristic feature of neopatrimonialism is the incorporation of patrimonial logic into bureaucratic institutions." Under a neopatrimonial system, unlike a patrimonial system, there is recognition of some difference between the private and public spheres. In practice, however, they are still not separated– meaning that two systems, the patrimonial system of personal relationships, and the legal-rational one of the bureaucracy, exist in parallel (although the patrimonial system may penetrate and deform the logic of the legal-rational system).

[68] Jean-Claude Willame, *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), p. 3
[69] Ishiyama, 43
[70] Gero Erdmann, "Neo Patrimonial Rule: Transition to Democracy has not Succeeded" *D+C Development and Cooperation* (1):8-11), 2002, p. 8

The concept of neopatrimonialism has become central to analyses of politics in the developing world and particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Bratton and Van de Walle write:

> Insofar as personalized exchanges, clientelism, and political corruption are common in all regimes, theorists have suggested that neopatrimonialism is a master concept for comparative politics, at least in the developing world.... We make a finer distinction– namely, that although neopatrimonial practices can be found in all polities, it is the core feature of politics in Africa and in a small number of other states, including Haiti, and perhaps Indonesia and the Philippines. Whereas personal relationships occur on the margins of all bureaucratic systems, they constitute the foundation and superstructure of political institutions in Africa. As a result, scholars of African politics have embraced the neopatrimonial model, or they have analysed the same general phenomena under related theoretical labels, including 'personal rule,' 'prebendalism,' and the 'politics of the belly.'[71]

Africanists have adopted this characterization in one form or another, although they have developed many different subcategories of personalist leadership in Africa. In their book, *Personal Rule in Black Africa*, Jackson and Rosberg, drawing on Weber, define personal rule as a form of rule that is dependent upon people rather than institutions, "a system of relations linking rulers not with the 'public' or even with the ruled, but with patrons, associates, clients, supporters, and rivals, who constitute the system."[72] It is "inherently authoritarian" in its monopolization of power and can arise in civilian and military regimes alike. In their descriptive theory of African personal rule, Jackson and Rosberg outline four types of personal rule: Princely, Autocratic, Prophetic and Tyrannical. Princes and Autocrats are portrayed as representing opposite ends of a continuum that is "marked by the absence of political religion or ideology and the presence of an almost

[71] Bratton and Van de Walle, 62-63; see also J. Bayart, *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly* (London: Longman, 1993) R. Joseph, ed. *State, Conflict and Democracy in Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), and P. Chabal and Jean-Pascal Daloz, *Africa Works: Disorder as a Political Instrument* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999)

[72] Jackson and Rosberg, 19

exclusive preoccupation with questions of personal power."[73] Whereas the Prince is prepared to rule in collaboration with oligarchs and follows an incipient constitutionalism, the Autocrat is unwilling to share power and has a greater freedom to exercise his will; he "commands and manages; the country is his estate; the ruling apparatus is ultimately his to deploy and direct."[74] The Prophet, generally a proponent of African socialism, rules by charisma and mission; he is rare and revolutionary, and exercises power in the service of a higher goal or authority, whether an ideology or a moral community.[75] Jackson and Rosberg's final ideal-typical ruler, the Tyrant, represents a type of leadership in itself and a residual type of rule that any of the others might deteriorate into; in a tyranny, "not only legal but also all moral constraints on the exercise of power are absent," producing the most arbitrary and brutal form of rule.[76]

Jackson and Rosberg's work, while insightful and descriptive, has been challenged on two fronts: first, their classification seems to be based more on leadership style than regime type; second, their claim that personal rule is non-institutional rule has met with criticism from scholars who now assert that even the most personalist systems of rule have entrenched their own versions of institutions. On the first point, Paul Brooker and Chazan et. al. have specific critiques. Brooker writes that personalism is more a style of leadership than a regime type– "Personal rule has occurred in many modern dictatorships and is not confined to any particular variety, whether party or military, totalitarian or authoritarian, rightist or leftist. The presence of personal rule is usually viewed as being only a secondary

[73] *ibid*., 180
[74] *ibid*., 78
[75] *ibid*., 182
[76] *ibid*., 80

or supplementary feature of a regime, not as a basis for classifying it as a personalist type of non-democratic regime."[77] Institutionalization, as Huntington has described, is the process by which "organizations and procedures acquire value and stability."[78] Jackson and Rosberg have argued that the rampant personalism of political systems in the developing world precludes a discussion of institutionalization or of neo-patrimonial institutions. Their work suggests that it is useless to speak of laws or rules when in Africa, "the rulers and other leaders take precedence over the formal rules of the political game: the rules do not effectively regulate political behaviour, and we therefore cannot predict or anticipate conduct from a knowledge of the rules... the state is a government of men and not of laws."[79] Bratton and Van de Walle, however, have suggested that neopatrimonialism and personalism have themselves become institutionalized patterns of rule. They write, "Neopatrimonialism does undermine formal rules and institutions, and it may be true that in the despotic tyrannies of a small number of leaders like Idi Amin or Macias Nguema, politics becomes almost entirely arbitrary and unpredictable. Nonetheless, we argue that when patrimonial logic is internalized in the formal institutions of neopatrimonial regimes, it provides essential operating codes for politics that are valued, recurring, and reproduced over time."[80] They write, "the broad routinization of an established set of behavioural norms and procedures is testimony that neopatrimonial practices are more than the idiosyncratic expressions of individual leaders."[81] They highlight three political institutions, admittedly informal, that have been predictable and stable in African neo-

[77] Brooker, 37
[78] Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 12
[79] Jackson and Rosberg, 10
[80] Bratton and Van de Walle, 63
[81] *ibid*.

patrimonial regimes: presidentialism, clientelism, and state resources. Thesis ideas take shape later in this thesis.

Bratton and Van de Walle take neopatrimonialism to be a master concept, and describe four types of neopatrimonial regime: personal dictatorship, military oligarchy, plebiscitary, and competitive one-party system. In drawing these distinctions, they determine whether the following of the national strongman in a given case is broadly or narrowly mobilized (using the question of participation in Robert Dahl's terms) and analyse the plurality of political associations within the governing institutions (in other words, competition).[82] Of interest in this review of sultanism is the concept of personal dictatorship–what they call "the quintessence of neopatrimonialism."[83] This type of neopatrimonial system has a highly exclusionary politics– the strongman generally rules by decree and "existing 'participatory' institutions cannot check the absolute powers of the chief executive. Further, the regime seeks to destroy even the semblance of political competition by eliminating all opponents to the 'big man', often physically."[84] The executive under this regime type seeks to weaken other political institutions and transform them into instruments of his personal political will.[85]

Naomi Chazan et. al. have formulated yet another categorization scheme for African regimes, based on the relations between the government and the society and the types of norms and rules that exist. The intent of rulers, they claim, is far less significant than the principles guiding their exercise of power. Six types of regimes that have emerged in

[82] Bratton and Van de Walle, 77 and Ishiyama, 45
[83] Bratton and Van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions," 474
[84] Ishiyama, 45
[85] *ibid*.

Africa in the postcolonial period are administrative-hegemonic, pluralist, party-mobilizing, party-centralist, personal-coercive, and populist. These regimes vary according to several criteria, including "the structure of the relationship between the administrative, the political, the coercive, and the legal apparatus; the degree of elite cohesion; the extent of societal exclusion and/or inclusion; rules and modes of social-governmental interaction; spheres of operation; longevity of institutional arrangements; and workability."[86]

Shared Characteristics of Neopatrimonial Regimes

No matter which scheme of classification is employed, there appear to be several characteristics that are developed to some extent by all of these Africanists as central features of African neopatrimonialism: clientelism, patronage, and corruption, at varying levels. As Jackson and Rosberg write, " The study of personal rule is an approach that highlights important features of African politics that other approaches play down or neglect altogether: clientelism and patronage, factionalism, coups, purges, plots, succession crises, and similar characteristics and dynamics of institutionless government."[87] Chazan develops the ideas of patronage and clientelism as a means of maintaining the political centre in African regimes, calling patron-client and patron-patron relations the most common form of political exchange in the postcolonial period. Jackson and Rosberg present clientelism as comprising patronage and loyalty. The substance and the conditions of the patron-client chains are the intermingling of these two factors: "first, the resources of patronage may be regarded as the motivation for the personal contracts and agreements of which patron-client

[86] N. Chazan, Robert Mortimer, John Ravenhill, Donald Rothchild and Stephen John Stedman, *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), p. 140-141
[87] Jackson and Rosberg, 6

ties consist; and second, the loyalty, which transcends mere interest and is the social 'cement' that permits such ties to endure in the face of resource fluctuations."[88] Clientelism, they suggest, is most likely to emerge in countries where the state is weakly institutionalized and highly personalized, and society is pluralistic with a particularistic culture.

Political fragmentation is another characteristic of neopatrimonialism. As Bratton and Van de Walle write, "Neopatrimonial regimes are characterized by rapid turnover of political personnel. To regulate and control rent seeking, to prevent rivals from developing their own power base, and to demonstrate their own power, rulers regularly rotate officeholders. Moreover, few rulers tolerate dissent; they typically expel potential opponents from government jobs, from approved institutions like ruling parties, or even from the country itself."[89] Jackson and Rosberg term this type of personnel rotation "purges and rehabilitations"– to purge is "to remove from an organization persons accused of being disloyal to the organization or ruler or undermining his authority or the unity of the regime... Purges may be concocted, as it were, to justify a removal for which there are no grounds other than the ruler's or some other important leader's displeasure."[90] Rehabilitation, then, is restoring these outcasts to political membership in the political monopoly.

Endemic corruption is another defining element of a neopatrimonial regime and is an extremely widespread phenomenon in Africa. Political and administrative corruption are related to systems of patronage. Corruption constitutes an "important means by which

[88] *ibid*., 40
[89] Bratton and Van de Walle, "Neopatrimonial Regimes and Political Transitions," 463
[90] Jackson and Rosberg, 53

individual wants and needs in a personal regime can be satisfied; it is a black market mode of conduct quite consistent with personally appropriated government yet fundamentally at odds with state rules and regulation, whose violation or evasion corrupt conduct entails."[91]

Linz and Stepan on Sultanism

Of all these classifications of different types of regimes exhibiting features of neopatrimonialism, several roughly overlap, and correspond with the final regime type described by Linz and Stepan: sultanism. Jackson and Rosberg's "autocrats" and "tyrants," Chazan's "personal-coercive" rulers, and Bratton and Van de Walle's "neopatrimonial, personal dictatorships" are not identical, but tend to describe the same group of rulers. By and large these rulers correspond to Linz's ideal type of sultanism (more appropriately neosultanism, first described with regards to Latin American regimes). The African cases which most closely fit Linz's description are Jean Bedel Bokassa in the Central African Republic, Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire, Francisco Macias Nguema in Equatorial Guinea, Hastings Kamuzu Banda in Malawi, and Idi Amin in Uganda.[92] Nguema and Amin, however, present cases where the typical enrichment of the ruler and his family was not so significant as under an ideal-typical sultanistic regime, while "arbitrary rule and destruction of society" were.[93] Descriptions of these regimes, under which "all policy dictates derive

[91] *ibid.*, 45

[92] These cases will be described in much greater detail in following chapters; for interesting biographical and political histories, see Jackson and Rosberg (esp. chapter on tyrants); on Amin, Nguema, and Bokassa, see Samuel Decalo, *Psychoses of Power: African Personal Dictatorships* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), Brian Titley, *Dark Age: The Political Odyssey of Emperor Bokassa* (Montreal: Queen's University Press, 1997); on Mobutu, see Jean-Claude Willame, *Patrimonialism and Political Change in the Congo* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), and Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982).

[93] Chehabi and Linz 1, 9

directly from the personal dictator" and "all of society is viewed as the personal fief and private domain of the dictator," closely correspond to what Linz calls sultanism.

Sultanism, Linz and Stepan's final regime ideal-type, is a term connoting "a generic style of domination and regime rulership" that draws on Weber's conceptualization of traditional rule and extreme forms of patrimonialism and personalism.[94] The concept of modern sultanism (or neosultanism, an adaptation of Weber's original concept) was introduced to the comparative politics discourse by Linz in 1975. He developed a virtual typology of patrimonial personal rule as a categorization of certain non-democratic regimes that seemed distinct from both totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. Of the four systems of personal rule he outlines, "modern sultanism was the most obviously personalist... and Linz's conception of modern sultanism could be used to describe a type of personalist dictatorship that did not readily fit into other categories."[95] In their more recent work, Chehabi and Linz present a more formal categorization of sultanism– under their description, a sultanistic regime is characterized by the "weakness of traditional and legal-rational legitimation and the lack of ideological justification."[96] The ideal type of a contemporary sultanistic regime can be constructed as follows: it is based on personal rulership, but loyalty to the ruler is motivated not by his embodying or articulating an ideology, nor by a unique personal mission, nor by any charismatic qualities, but by a mixture of fear and rewards to his collaborators. The ruler exercises his power without restraint, at his own discretion and above all unencumbered by rules or by any commitment to an ideology or value system. Sultanism is one step beyond a neo-patrimonial regime–

[94] Linz and Stepan, 52
[95] Brooker, 55
[96] Chehabi and Linz 1, 7

the circle of clients is narrower and the discretion of the ruler more extensive under sultanism.[97] According to Chehabi and Linz, true patrimonial systems are limited by tradition, whereas in modern sultanistic ones the scope for arbitrariness is much wider, while the greater development of the state apparatus means that bureaucratization is more advanced. "Sultanistic leaders do not conceal the highly personalistic nature of their rule. Outwardly this personalism has two facets: a pronounced cult of personality around the leader and a tendency towards dynasticism."[98]

Sultanism as an Ideal Type

To demonstrate its points of departure from Linz and Stepan's three other ideal forms of non-democratic rule (totalitarianism, post-totalitarianism, and authoritarianism) discussed above, sultanism is described here using their four regime characteristics. Under a sultanistic regime, economic and social pluralism is subject to unpredictable intervention from the ruler– no group or individual is free from the ruler's exercise of despotic power. There is no rule of law and very low levels of political institutionalization. The polity in effect becomes the "personal domain of the sultan," a domain marked by the absence of rule of law and low levels of institutionalization. Under sultanism there may be extensive economic and social pluralism, but political pluralism is almost never present because political power is so directly entwined with the ruler. However, as Linz and Stepan write, the "essential reality in a sultanistic regime is that all individuals, groups, and institutions are permanently subject to the unpredictable and despotic intervention of the sultan, and

[97] *ibid*., 9
[98] *ibid*., 33

thus all pluralism is precarious."[99]

Leadership under a sultanistic regime is highly personalistic and very arbitrary, operating free from legal-rational constraints. Leaders are unencumbered by ideology and public compliance to their rule is based on a mixture of fear and rewards. The position of regime officials derives from their "purely personal submission to the ruler."[100] No guiding ideology exists, and sultanism is marked by an absence even of the distinctive mentalities found under authoritarian rule. In place of ideology, however, there is a "highly arbitrary manipulation of symbols... [and] extreme glorification of ruler." There may be a created, leader-centric pseudo-ideology; this, however, may not be believed by the ruler's staff, subjects, or observers in the outside world.[101] Mobilization occurs routinely within state-sponsored organizations in order to present some degree of popular conformity or compliance, but this false mobilization generally fosters boredom and withdrawal, and "ultimately privatization of population's values becomes an accepted fact."[102]

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[99] Linz and Stepan, 53
[100] *ibid.*, 45
[101] *ibid.*, 45
[102] Linz and Stepan, 45. Sultanism should be considered as distinct from authoritarian and totalitarian (and post-totalitarian) rule. It can be mainly distinguished from authoritarianism in its levels of institutionalization and pluralism. Authoritarian regimes have a greater level of institutionalization and there is a level of tolerance for political and social pluralism that is non-existent under sultanism. Under sultanism there is no rule of law, no allowance for a semi-opposition, no possibilities of pacts between regime moderates and democratic moderates, and no autonomous sphere of the economy or civil society. Degrees of mobilization are different under the two types of regime as well– whereas authoritarianism has little or no mobilization, sultanistic regimes occasionally have ruler-manipulated and controlled mobilization at low levels. Authoritarianism operates without an elaborate and guiding ideology but with distinctive mentalities; sultanism does "not even have these mentalities (outside of the despotic personalism), and relies instead on the personality cult of the ruler. Indeed, while 'the essence of sultanism is unrestrained personal rulership', leadership in authoritarian regimes is formally ill-defined but nevertheless predictable." (Cummings, 8) In one key respect, totalitarianism and sultanism are similar– the leader, in both regime types, rules with undefined limits to his power– creating high levels of unpredictability for both elites and citizens. In this respect, write Linz and Stepan, "a Stalin and a Somoza are alike." (Linz and Stepan, 54) There are, however, important differences. Totalitarian ideology is central to that type of regime– with its "sense of impersonal and public mission, it is meant to play an important legitimating function. Ideological pronouncements of a totalitarian leader are taken seriously not only by his followers and cadres, but also by the society and

To maintain power, sultanistic regimes rely on a mixture of fear and rewards for regime supporters.[103] Sultanistic regimes penetrate societies very unevenly. There is no continuous political mobilization and therefore for the public, there is no sense (real or imagined) or participation in social and political life. While there is a need for the sultanistic ruler to "forge alliances with civil society and build coalitions," effectively, a sultanistic regime's social bases are clientelistic and restricted to associates, family members, and cronies.[104]

Monopolization of certain economic resources gives sultanistic rulers greater freedom to act. Combined with the system of cronyism, this creates huge economic corruption and what has been called the "kleptocratic" state. Sultanism may involve arbitrary takeovers of property, and "The personalistic use of power for the essentially private ends of the ruler and his collaborators means that the country is run like a huge domain. The boundaries between the public treasury and the private wealth of the ruler become blurred."[105] In the long run the personalism and corruption of the political system negatively affects economic development.

Sultanism and neopatrimonialism provide very relevant frameworks and contextual literature for consideration of political developments in post-Soviet Turkmenistan. The discussions of neopatrimonialism in sub-Saharan Africa after the departure of colonial powers in particular has broadened the concept and may provide one of the most useful

intellectuals, including– in the cases of Leninism, Stalinism, and Marxism (and even fascism)– by intellectuals outside the state in which the leader exercises control." (Linz and Stepan, 54) The strength of the guiding ideologies in totalitarianism places constraint on the leadership that is absent under sultanism. The use of terror under sultanism, when it occurs, is not ideologically motivated, and the regime lacks a mass party, mass mobilization, and the self-enrichment of rulers along true ideological lines.

[103] Chehabi and Linz 1, 19

[104] *ibid.*, 20

[105] *ibid.*, 22

starting points to understand the nature and behaviour of personalist regimes in Central Asia. The following chapter will discuss some of the factors that contribute to the rise and continuance of sultanistic regimes, and then discuss in some detail the features of historical sultanistic regimes in Africa and contemporary governance under Niyazov in Turkmenistan.

CHAPTER TWO

DYSFUNCTIONAL AUTHORITY IN AFRICA AND TURKMENISTAN

When Linz wrote his 1975 article reintroducing the concept of sultanism, the regime of Rafael Trujillo in the Dominican Republic was the archetype of sultanistic regimes. Since then, scholars have confirmed the applicability of Linz's paradigm to various regimes across regions, including some not mentioned or not yet existent in 1975. Crawford Young and Thomas Turner classified Mobutu Sese Seko's regime in Zaire as a personalist patrimonial state that resembles Linz's concept of sultanism. Terry Karl characterized the regimes of Juan Vicente Gomez and Marcos Perez Jimenez in Venezuela as sultanistic, and Chehabi explored how the Shah of Iran's sultanism contributed to the Islamic revolution. The concept was applied to local politics in the Philippines by John Thayer Sidel, and to Ferdinand Marcos's rule by Mark Thompson. Stepan and Linz categorized Ceausescu's Romania as typifying a post-totalitarian sultanism.[1] In their 1998 account of theories and examples of sultanistic regimes, Chehabi and Linz compiled accounts of sultanistic regimes throughout the 20th century, namely those in Latin American and Asia, including Jorge I. Dominguez's essay on Cuba's Batista regime, John A. Booth on the Somoza regime in Nicaragua, and an analysis of the Haitian Duvaliers by David Nicholls.[2]

Most of these regimes belong to the past, and sultanism is popularly conceived as anachronistic. The number of sultanistic regimes and regimes with pronounced personality cults has indeed declined over the past two decades, largely due to the end of the Cold War. Michael Denison writes, "With the exception of Cold War era hold-outs such as the regimes of Colonel Mu'ammar Gadaffi in Libya or Kim Jung Il in

[1] Linz and Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation: Southern Europe, South America, and Post-Communist Europe*. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996) ch. 18 "The Effects of Totalitarianism-cum-Sultanism on Democratic Transition: Romania", drawing on Stepan's article "Romania: in a Sultanistic State," *Times Literary Supplement* (October 1992), 26-27.

[2] See Jorge I. Dominguez, "The Batista Regime in Cuba"; John A. Booth, "The Somoza Regime in Nicaragua"; and David Nicholls, "The Duvalier Regime in Haiti"; all in Chehabi and Linz, *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998)

North Korea... and a small handful of long-standing African leaders such as Omar Bongo in Gabon and Gnassingbe Eyadema in Togo, leadership cults appear to be, in fashion parlance, 'out'– a kitsch reminder of a different era."[3] The end of the US-Soviet struggle has diminished the strategic value of propping up personal rulers, and democratization has become the jargon of the day. Does the concept of sultanism, then, still hold value in understanding regimes today? Chehabi and Linz write, "Sadly, the answer is yes."[4] Brooker, in his work on non-democratic regimes, writes of the continuing significance of non-democratic regime theory for today's scholars of comparative politics, noting that "Although the world has entered an 'age of democracy', non-democratic regimes continue to be of more than just historical interest to students of comparative government and politics."[5]

Sultanistic Regimes in the African Context

Sultanism has proven to be a useful label for several 20th century personalistic regimes. Its application to various regimes has allowed the concept to escape the criticism often levelled against inductively derived concepts– that they lead, in Pareto's words, "from facts to concepts, and from concepts back to facts."[6] Post-colonial Africa, the genesis of much of the academic work on personalist rule, is a historical context rife with examples of regimes that approximate sultanism.

Although in Chehabi and Linz's book on the theory of sultanism, no chapters are specifically devoted to examples of African regimes, African examples receive

[3] Michael Denison, "Are They Laughing At Us?" Strategies of Compliance and Resistance to the Leadership Cult in Contemporary Turkmenistan, Leeds University, 2003, p. 2-3
[4] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanistic Regimes 2: Genesis and Demise of Sultanistic Regimes", in *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 47
[5] Sally Cummings, ed., *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 1
[6] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule," in *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 5

much attention in the theoretical chapters in the book's first half, the chapters written by the editors. In a review of Chehabi and Linz's contribution, Young affirms the merits of the ideal type of sultanism in historical discussions of post-colonial African regimes; aside from the four regimes highlighted by Chehabi and Linz as African examples of sultanism—Amin's Uganda, Bokassa's Central African Republic, Nguema's Equatorial Guinea, and Mobutu's Zaire, Young mentions Morocco's authentic sultan, King Hassan II, and suggests that "other possible nominees might include Libya, Togo, Malawi (under Hastings Banda), Kenya (under Daniel arap Moi), and Cameroon (under Ahmadu Ahidjo and Paul Biya), in addition to Abacha in Nigeria."[7]

Studies of sub-Saharan Africa provide useful tools for students of personalist rule more generally, and an emerging dialogue is forming on the utility of a comparison between Africa and post-Soviet Eurasia. In a recent work edited by Mark R. Beissinger and Young, regional specialists consider the growing relevance of comparing nations in the post-Soviet space with the African cases to draw lessons for transition and development. Systematic paired comparison of Africa and Eurasia, they suggest, helps scholars understand "the state crises that have engulfed these two regions: their origins, their similarities, the ways in which they interact with interstate relations and with the global processes of change... the effect of state crises on salient social divisions such as cultural difference and gender, and some of the pathways potentially leading out of crisis that are suggested by experience."[8] They argue that despite different historical trajectories and cultural contexts, there are powerful and compelling similarities in contemporary situations that render comparison useful.

[7] Crawford Young, "Resurrecting Sultanism", *Journal of Democracy* 10(3):165-168 (1999), p. 168
[8] Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young, eds., *Beyond State Crisis: Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), p. 3

They particularly highlight the "dysfunctions of authority" across the two regions.[9] A significant body of academic experts, both Africanists and scholars of post-Soviet space, now find this comparison thinkable– in a recent essay on neopatrimonialism, John Ishiyama writes, "To a large extent, the Central Asian states that emerged from the carcass of the Soviet Union appear to be much like the African states which emerged from the collapse of European colonialism."[10]

While it falls beyond the scope of this thesis to detail the rise and fall of each of the examples of African rule that have approximated the sultanistic model, a brief outline of the major features of some of these regimes will better contextualize discussions of Turkmenistan's current government under Niyazov. This thesis will explore some of the ways in which sultanistic regimes in post-colonial Africa have behaved in order to better analyse the ways in which Niyazov's regime operates—and whether it mirrors or departs from historical models. All this is done in the hope that the so-called "erratic" and "unpredictable" tendencies of Turkmenistan's regime can become more understandable, and perhaps more predictable. While the situation in Turkmenistan by no means parallels every feature of the post-colonial African experience, regime typologies exist to aid comparison. If any clues can be garnered to aid in understanding contemporary Turkmenistan, then the rich literature on personal rule will be the place to begin. The similarities may in fact be more instructive than the differences, and these similarities may give scholars a better understanding of what to anticipate in Turkmenistan.

Of interest below is the diversity in circumstance and situation among the

[9] Beissinger and Young, 6

[10] John Ishiyama, "Neopatrimonialism and the prospects for democratization in the Central Asian republics," in Sally Cummings, ed. *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 44

post-colonial African sultanistic regimes.[11] They have arisen in a variety of post-colonial contexts, from under different colonial powers and in different areas of Africa. Some are military leaders, but not all; some are the first leaders of their independent countries, and some the second. Some demonstrated extremely high levels of violence and brutality, while others are more subtly eccentric and less violent. As Decalo writes, "The precise personality idiosyncrasies of each leader manifest themselves in diverse particularistic concerns once the leader is in power; but in all instances the modality of rule is the same."[12] No matter what their circumstance of political gain, or how bizarre their personal eccentricities, the following leaders can all be said to approximate Chehabi and Linz's ideal type of sultanism.

Mobutu Sese Seko's Zaire

One of the most oft-cited examples of African sultanism is found in the Congo, in the regime of Mobutu Sese Seko. Born Joseph-Desire Mobutu in Lisala (in what was then the Belgian Congo), he joined the *Force Publique* (the Belgian Congolese army) in 1949, rising to the rank of sergeant major. He left the military in 1956, going to work as a journalist and editor, and in 1958 joined the nationalist MNC, the *Mouvement National Congolais*. After independence was granted in June 1960, he became part of the new government as the state secretary for defence (the new government was a coalition between Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba and

[11] There are some interesting similarities, as well, which have been discussed already to some extent in the previous chapter. Decalo, in his instructive book on Bokassa, Amin, and Nguema, points out that these three tyrants shared socioeconomic backgrounds demonstrating a so-called rise from rags to riches, with troubled home lives and lost parents. They also all exhibited high levels of brutality in their governance, not a condition of sultanistic rule but something that often is found under sultanistic regimes. All three of these rulers also relied on soothsayers and sorcerers to spread myths of their omniscience and power.

[12] Samuel Decalo, *Psychoses of Power: African Personal Dictatorships* (Gainesville: Florida Academic Press, 1989), p. 4

President Joseph Kasavubu, who became involved in a struggle for power). In September 1960 a coup d'etat overthrew Lumumba in support of Kasavubu. Mobutu, a key figure in the coup, was rewarded with rapid promotion within the military. In 1965, Mobutu (then Lieutenant General) seized power from President Kasavubu following another power struggle (between Kasavubu and his prime minister, Mose Tshombe). Mobutu, declaring himself president for five years, quickly centralized power, putting down a coup attempt in 1967, and was "elected" to the presidency in 1970.

Mobutu began a drive for Africanization, an anti-European, pro-African cultural awareness program[13], under which he named the country the Republic of Zaire in October 1971, and renamed himself Mobutu Sese Seko Nkuku Wa Za Banga ("The all-powerful warrior who, because of his endurance and inflexible will to win, will go from conquest to conquest, leaving fire in his wake") in 1972. His cult of personality became deeply entrenched over time-- Jackson and Rosberg write, "The glorification of Mobutu has accompanied his efforts at increasing the cultural and economic independence and stature of Zaire. The image of himself and the conception he wished to project of the Zairian state became increasingly indistinguishable: a cult of 'Mobutuism' was matched by a program of Zairian 'authenticity'; the power and fame of the ruler were pursued parallel with a dramatic gamble to enhance the wealth of the economy while at the same time a diplomacy calculated to appeal to other African and Third World leaders was promoted."[14] They posit that "In Mobutu's bid for national glory, three stratagems stand out: his encouragement of the cult of Mobutuism, his promotion of his political party as the central political agency of the

[13] Arguably a cynical project to develop and entrench Mobutu's network of personal patronage to further bolster his rule. For more detail, see Chapter 4.
[14] Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1982), p. 171

state, and his pursuit of cultural and psychological decolonization represented by the policy of 'authenticity.'"[15]

Economically, Mobutu's regime was considered a massive kleptocracy. Initially, Mobutu nationalized all foreign-owned firms, forcing out European investors, which precipitated a huge economic decline, prompting Mobutu's 1977 campaign to woo back foreign investors. He was in need of external military aid as well, to repulse attacks in the Katanga province by rebels based in Angola. Despite problems, he gained re-election in 1977, as the sole candidate standing for the presidency. He increased his personal fortune, which in 1984 was estimated at US $4 billion, mostly in Swiss banks.

Due to economic problems and domestic unrest, Mobutu in mid-1990 agreed to lift the ban on political parties and appointed a transitional government meant to lead to elections, although he retained substantial powers. Factional divisions led to the creation in 1993 of two governments, one pro- and one anti-Mobutu (this one headed by Laurent Monsengwo and Etienne Tshisekedi). Mobutu appointed Kengo Wa Dondo as prime minister. Mobutu was overthrown in the war known as the First Congo War, which was an incursion of Tutsis into Zaire's eastern regions, who joined forces with locals opposed to the president; in May 1997 the forces, following failed peace talks, captured Kinshasa, and Zaire was renamed the Democratic Republic of Congo. Mobutu went into temporary exile in Togo, then moved to Morocco, and Laurent-Desire Kabila became the new president. Mobutu died in September 1997 in Rabat, Morocco, from prostate cancer.

Mobutu's regime closely approximates the definition of an ideal typical sultanistic regime. During his reign, he became increasingly arbitrary and self-

[15] *ibid.*, 171-172

sufficient in his exercise of power. He took care to balance his bases of support and his external allies and donors, and constructed a pseudo-ideological program known as *Mobutuisme* to justify his rule to the public. Mobutu's was an exceptionally personalized regime and therefore has been often classified as both neopatrimonial and sultanistic.

Jean-Bedel Bokassa's Central African Republic

Jean-Bedel Bokassa (1921-1996) was the president and Emperor of the Central African Republic from January 1966 until his overthrow on 20 September 1979. Born in Bobangi, Moyen-Congo, in the Central African Republic (then part of French Equatorial Africa, known as Oubangui-Chari), Bokassa was the son of a village chief, but was orphaned at the age of six, and became a career soldier, joining the Free French Forces and becoming a sergeant major by the end of World War II. By 1961 he had become a captain, and he left the French army in 1964 to join the Central African Republic army, gaining a high position and the chieftaincy of the armed forces partly due to his familial ties to President David Dacko (his cousin) and Dacko's predecessor Barthelemy Boganda (his uncle). Bokassa was also automatically placed in command of the nascent Central African forces on the eve of colonialism in Equatorial Africa, in the "absence of alternate or more suitable Oubangui-Chari officers in the demobilized French Colonial armies."[16]

On the first of January, 1966, Bokassa took advantage of the country's economic turmoil to overthrow the autocratic Dacko in a swift coup d'etat, assuming power as President and head of the country's only political party, the *Mouvement pour l'evolution sociale de l'Afrique Noirse* (MESAN). Abolishing the constitution

[16] Decalo, 194

that had been adopted in the mid-1950s, Bokassa began to rule by decree. Decalo writes, "After he seized power in Bangui, Bokassa ruled the CAR as his personal fiefdom. . . he became increasingly idiosyncratic in his policies."[17] An attempted coup in the spring of 1969 gave Bokassa the impetus to further crack down on opposition and consolidate his power. In 1972 he declared himself President for Life, and survived another coup attempt in late 1974 and an assassination attempt in 1976.

Bokassa's vanity played a large role in his style of governance. Those in his entourage "encouraged his flights of imagination, flattered his vanity, and even concocted projects to appeal to his pride. State policy became an extension of Bokassa's ego as the distinctions among the state, the presidency, and Bokassa as an individual became blurred."[18] He frequently shuffled cabinet ministers and his methods of rule encouraged inertia and governmental paralysis. Decalo writes, "Bokassa's every fancy and idiosyncrasy—however irrational or infeasible—became state policy."[19] His cult of personality quickly became entrenched, with his picture adorning every wall and textbook and many public works bearing his name. Political prisoners were many, as were magnanimous amnesties, as well as arbitrary executions. Bokassa's thirteen years of control in the Central African Republic rested on three factors—first, France's direct and indirect support for the regime; secondly, Bokassa's control of the security services and support from the civil service; and finally, the socioeconomic and political void in Bangui that retarded the formation of sources of opposition.

Bokassa played former colonial power France off against its neighbours to secure international funding for his regime. In late 1969 he became a Marxist after

[17] *ibid.*, 129
[18] *ibid.*, 148
[19] *ibid.*, 149

visiting Brazzaville, and initiated a pro-Eastern foreign policy in 1970. When no material benefits poured in, he retreated back to a Western bent. After meeting with Libya's Qadhaffi, Bokassa converted to Islam, changing his name to Salah Eddine Ahmed Bokassa, calculating the assurance then of ongoing Libyan monetary aid. However, "when disillusioned by Qadaffi's lack of generosity, Bokassa and his court casually reverted to their original faith."[20]

In late 1976, Bokassa's imperial ambitions began to take shape. According to Decalo, "the idea of proclaiming himself emperor stemmed from Bokassa's adoration of pomp and splendour, and out of his desire to imitate Napoleon Bonaparte, an individual he particularly admired and identified with." [21] He dissolved the government, replacing it with the *Conseil de la Revolution Centrafricaine*, then declared the republic a monarchy, the Central African Empire, issuing an imperial constitution. He converted back to Catholicism and crowned himself Emperor Bokassa I on 4 December 1977 in a lavish ceremony sometimes referred to as *le grand folie,* which was financially backed by the French and drew on Napoleonic examples. Bokassa spent over $20 million on the coronation, which was disappointingly not attended by any of the invited foreign leaders.

In the new Empire, suppression of opposition remained widespread, and torture was reportedly also very common, with Bokassa allegedly participating personally in many beatings. Despite international criticism, France still supported Bokassa, with French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing remaining a friend of Bokassa's, and a companion on hunting trips and recipient of personal gifts. By early 1979, however, French support for the regime began to erode after a massacre of civilians, prompted by rioting in Bangui. In April 1979, a number of students were

[20] *ibid*., 150
[21] *ibid*., 160

arrested for protesting the requirement of donning expensive, government-mandated school uniforms, and around 100 were reportedly killed. Former President Dacko, gaining French support and using French troops, led a successful coup in September 1979 while Bokassa was away in Libya.

Bokassa's regime shares many of the features of sultanistic regimes—from his excessive personal wealth to his lavish spending and construction of palaces, chateaux and hunting parks. To a huge degree, Bokassa's was a highly personalized style of rule, and his regime featured him as the central and dominant player, coming to a pinnacle in his coronation as Emperor of the Central African Empire. His short-lived conversion to Islam demonstrates his reliance upon external donors but also his lack of guiding ideology, while his population was meant to ascribe to his version of the national's glorious imperial path. From his relationship with the military to his grandiose spending schemes, Bokassa is another African ruler who closely approximates the model of sultanism provided by Chehabi and Linz.

Idi Amin's Uganda

Idi Amin (1925-2003), one of Africa's most brutal and violent examples of post-colonial leadership, is another leader closely approximating the model of a sultanistic regime. Born in 1925 in Koboko county (the distant Sudanic fringe periphery of Uganda), Amin was also from a military background, having joined the King's African Rifles of the British colonial army as a private in 1946, rising to lieutenant rank despite a lack of schooling. An accomplished athlete (champion swimmer and boxer), he developed a reputation for cruelty from his time in the military, but rose through the ranks, reaching sergeant major before being made an *effendi,* which was the highest rank possible for a black African in the British army.

After independence (in October 1962), Milton Obote, the first prime minister of Uganda, rewarded his loyalty by promoting him to captain in 1963 and deputy army commander in 1964.

Amin's rise to power came following a scandal in 1965 in which Obote and Amin were implicated in a deal to smuggle gold, coffee and ivory out of Congo, which put Obote on the defensive—he promoted Amin to chief of staff, and declared himself the new president, forcing Mutesa II (the previous president) into exile in Britain. Amin began the recruitment of members of his own tribe into the army, also attracting many Muslims from his area of the West Nile into northwest Uganda. Relations between Amin and Obote grew tense, and Obote put Amin under house arrest, and then demoted him in the army. Believing that his arrest was imminent, Amin seized power in a coup on 25 January 1971 (assisted by Rwandan exiles, targeted as enemies by Obote) while Obote was away in Singapore, and declared himself the new president. Initially, Uganda and the international community welcomed Amin; he freed many political prisoners, disbanded the Secret Police, and promised elections within months. However, many foreign journalists perceived him as a somewhat eccentric leader, fond of racing cars, boxing, and Disney cartoons.

The comic façade hid a brutal leadership style, however; shortly after his rise to power, Amin established killing squads to hunt down remaining supporters of Obote and much of the intelligentsia. Military leaders who did not support him were often beheaded. From his exile in Tanzania, Obote attempted to take back power—sending in military invaders without success. Amin's retaliation was to purge the army of certain tribes, and ethnic violence encompassed the whole of the army and spread to civilians as well, as Amin's paranoia grew. The Nile Mansions Hotel in Kampala became an infamous interrogation and torture centre. By the end of Amin's

first year in office, 10,000 people had died; this number reached 250,000 before Amin was ousted from office.

Despite his military qualifications, Decalo writes, "Amin's Uganda was not a military dictatorship but a personal dictatorship headed by the chief of staff. Uganda became the personal fiefdom of a brutal despot, within which there was no semblance of law and order, established administration, or set of policy guidelines. This was a tyranny where personal whims dictated policy, expertise played no role in government and administration, the economy was but a source of plunder for the ruling elite, and foreign policy was rooted in the whims and biases of the paramount leader."[22] Amin became increasingly erratic over the years of his rule. He donned dozens of medals from World War II, having his tunics specially lengthened to fit more medals, and granted himself a number of official titles, for example: "His Excellency President for Life, Field Marshal Al Hadji Doctor Idi Amin, VC, DSO, MC, Lord of All the Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Sea, and Conqueror of the British Empire in Africa in General and Uganda in Particular," and, bizarrely, "King of Scotland." His paranoia and suspicious nature grew after each of 22 known assassination attempts and attempted coups against him; as a result, Amin was constantly switching plans and motorcade routes, rotating conjugal visits to wives and mistresses, and driving different cars. Decalo writes, "Unfamiliar and impatient with the intricacies of government and administration, Amin ruled in the style of an oriental potentate… government by whim or gut-reaction became the norm… The state treasury became an extension of his private coffers."[23] In late 1972, following an alleged dream in which God spoke to Amin and instructed him to expel all Asians, Amin gave Uganda's 70,000 Asians 90 days to leave the country, and deported those

[22] *ibid*., 104
[23] Decalo, 98

who remained to the countryside. He severed diplomatic relations with Israel and with Britain four years later. In 1972, Amin turned for support to Libya and the Soviet Union.

In the late 1970s, Amin attempted to cover up an army mutiny while at the same time ordering an invasion of Tanzania with the help of Libyan troops. Tanzania began a counter-attack, and in April 1979 Amin was forced to leave his capital, Kampala, and the Tanzanian army took the city with the assistance of Ugandan exiles and Rwandan guerrillas. Amin fled to exile, first in Libya and then Saudi Arabia. He died in Saudi Arabia on 16 August 2003 and was buried in Jeddah.

While Amin's regime stands out for its severe brutality, at its core it functioned in many of the same ways as the other regimes that are deemed sultanistic. Amin, a ruler with highly centralized, personalized authority, ruled with an iron fist and as a solitary figure. He dominated his cadres and used the systems of cronyism to his advantage. His cult of personality was manifest and his grabbing of lofty titles for himself serves as an example of the role of patriarchal paternalism at work in Uganda, a feature that is salient in most of the sultanistic cases considered here.

Francisco Macias Nguema's Equatorial Guinea

Equatorial Guinea's first post-colonial leader, Francisco Macias Nguema (1924-1979), can be classified as a leader with strong sultanistic tendencies. Born in Oyem in the Woleu Ntem province of Gabon in 1924 to a much-feared sorcerer, Nguema was raised in Nyasanyong in the district of Mongomo.[24] Under Spanish colonial rule, he rose to the position of Mayor of Mongomo, and later he served as a member of the territorial parliament—the Spanish, hard-pressed to find loyal allies

[24] *ibid.*, 50

within the country's ethnic Fang elite, found him to be an essentially apolitical and trustworthy collaborator, which helped to advance his career. He was elected president before independence in 1968. During his presidency, his country gained the nickname "the Auschwitz of Africa" and became notorious for political executions and virulent anti-Spanish radio speeches.

Nguema acted to marginalize all possible opponents, imprisoning, starving and executing the country's pre-independence prime minister, Bonifacio Ondo Edu shortly after his rise to power. Other officials passed away or reportedly "committed suicide" while in detention camps and prisons. Human rights violations were rampant under Macias Nguema's regime, and caused the exodus of over one-third of the country's population to neighbouring countries. His actions while in power were almost entirely punitive and destructive to the country and the society—nothing short of a reign of terror, characterized by systematic and gruesome killing. Nguema liquidated the entire budding political leadership of the 1960s, and the threat was so high that by the end of his reign, not one university graduate remained in Equatorial Guinea.

Nguema's policies were violently anti-colonialist and opposed to religion. Three important pillars of his rule were the United National Workers' Party (PUNT, which replaced pre-independence parties), the youth group/militia *Juventud en Marcha con Macias*, and the Esangui clan of Rio Muni. Macias Nguema's relatives and members of his clan controlled the military and the presidential guard, which were the regime's instruments of repression. Decalo suggests that "the lengthy survival of dictatorship in Equatorial Guinea was rooted in (1) its ruthless use of terror, which pulverized the will to resist by its random arbitrariness and casual brutality; (2) the liquidation or hounding into exile of all educated people and

potential sources of opposition; (3) the complete isolation of the country from outside influences or scrutiny; (4) the skilful manipulation and magnification of Nguema's widely attributed supernatural powers, which terrorized into immobility large segments of the traditional society; (5) the regime's total control of literally all commodities and patronage in Equatorial Guinea, a fact that glued Nguema to his cohorts; and (6) Nguema's personal and kinship network in the security forces, which maintained his partners in the mayhem that was ravaging Equatorial Guinea tightly under control."[25]

The president's actions were often characterized externally as paranoid—hating the educated, he banned the use of the word "intellectual" and he also destroyed boats, banning fishing. Nguema "Africanized" his name to Masie Nguema Biyogo Negue Ndong, in 1976, and demanded the same of the rest of the population of Equatorial Guinea. He developed an extreme cult of personality (perhaps, it has been posited, fuelled by his consumption of "copious amounts of bhang and iboga"), assigning himself titles such as the "Unique Miracle" and "Grand Master of Education, Science and Culture." Macias Nguema declared himself President for Life in 1972.

Like all sultanistic regimes, Nguema's never formulated any sort of ideology until after his rise to power—Decalo writes, "Naïve, with only a rudimentary grasp of matters of state or economics, Nguema never formulated a cohesive policy, a set of national goals, or for that matter any developmental ideology. His 'policy' speeches, both at home and abroad, were lengthy, rambling rantings…. His world outlook—if he ever really had one—was 'confused, unknown, undefined' and his actions were… fundamentally, just the gut reactions of a leader accustomed to selfishly personalizing

[25] *ibid.*, 61

everything without concern for wider societal consequences."[26] His reliance upon witchcraft and the occult was strong: "It is indeed difficult to comprehend Nguema's lengthy dictatorship in Equatorial Guinea without a proper awareness of his unerring utilization and manipulation of traditional beliefs and religion, including sorcery and witchcraft, both to prop up his 'legitimacy' and to terrorize the population into immobile submission."[27] His father was a venerated sorcerer in a society where ancestral worship and witchcraft continue to play a major role (despite nominal Catholicism)—during his reign, Nguema became something of a religious figure, with constant adulatory praise of the leader in the liturgy and contentions that "there is no God other than Macias" becoming commonplace in the churches.

On 3 August 1979 he was overthrown by his nephew, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo. He was captured, tried on grounds of genocide, and executed weeks later by hired Moroccan troops, because no Equatoguinean soldier would participate, believing the former President to have magical powers.

Macias Nguema's regime is another that can be accurately classified as sultanistic, or as sharing some characteristics of sultanism. Like Amin's, his was a reign of terror, with the use of penalty and excessive force defining his style of rule in many ways. While this sets his regime apart to some extent, its features are still those of a sultanistic regime. His manipulation of witchcraft and supernatural belief formed the basis of his cult of personality and his legitimating doctrine, while his use of the security forces and his extreme isolation of the population are both features of many sultanistic regimes.

Hastings Kamuzu Banda's Malawi

[26] *ibid.*, 55
[27] *ibid.*, 52

Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda (1896-1997) was Malawi's founding President, and Young has suggested that his style of one-party rule is another that exhibits strong sultanistic characteristics—it has been described as "rule with an iron hand," by a "paternalist despot"[28]. Banda was trained as a doctor in Scotland, and having lived in the United Kingdom for many years (where he developed a strong personal ideology of pan-Africanism), he faced problems of transition when he moved back to then-Nyasaland. Unable to speak his native language Chinyanja fluently, Banda needed an interpreter to conduct his business. He campaigned against the Central African Federation, which dissolved in 1963 and led the country to independence as Malawi. Banda became Prime Minister in February 1963 and President in 1966 when Malawi was declared a republic. In 1971, he declared himself President for Life. Over the course of his one-party rule, Banda accumulated at least US $320 million in personal assets.

Banda's edicts and instructions, based on his personal desires, set the national standards, and he required demonstrations of loyalty bordering on servility. The official regime slogan was "Unity, Loyalty, Obedience, and Discipline". Banda was considered the *Ngwazi* (conqueror or champion) of Malawi, a man with exceptional valour and achievement. He was President for Life and the sole manager of the state, making all of the important political appointments and frequently rotating government ministers "in a manner calculated to remind them of their total dependence upon his continued favour. His rule is absolute insofar as no important jurisdictions of law or policy—including the courts—are secure from his intervention or meddling."[29] Jackson and Rosberg wrote in the early 1980s that "the 'royalism' of Banda's presidency was cultivated by slogans such as 'Kamazu knows best,' by extensive

[28] In Jackson and Rosberg, 159
[29] Jackson and Rosberg, 160

display of his portrait in the press and elsewhere, by public demonstrations that celebrate his comings and goings, by popular songs in his praise, and by the celebration of Kamazu Day, which has replaced the Queen's Birthday as an annual occasion of national festivity…. Observers have been struck by the extent to which Banda has encouraged the cultivation of royalism: 'Within the 'Malawi tribe,' the position Banda had come to hold was like that of one of the old *Maravi* kings, complete with divine right and absolute authority. So, at least, he saw himself, and so he wanted to be seen.' In addition, the trappings of chieftaincy have been put to use—for example, Banda carries traditional staffs of authority (such as the fly-whisk) and his entourage is 'preceded by a modern version of the praise-maker—a Land-Rover fitted with loudspeakers—and welcoming groups of undulating women symbolically sweeping the ground with brushwood in front of his path.'"[30]

In the early 1980s, his penchant for bizarre decrees caused some amusement to Malawians when he banned the Simon and Garfunkel song "Cecilia" from the radio, at a time when his relationship with his mistress, who was named Cecilia Tamanda Kadzamira, was in a rocky period and he disapproved of the song's lyrics. Banda's conservatism also meant that television came late to Malawi, and was not available until the early 1990s. Banda instituted a dress code for all citizens—women were not allowed to bare their thighs and trousers were not allowed. For men, long hair was outlawed as a sign of dissent, and men could be seized and forced to have a haircut at the discretion of border officials or police. Banda established a school modelled on Eton, called the Kamuzu Academy, in which Malawian children were taught Latin and Ancient Greek by expatriate Classics teachers.

Finally allowing democratic elections in 1994, Hastings Banda was defeated

[30] *ibid.*, 161

by Bakili Muluzi, a Yao from the southern region of the country whose two terms in office were not without serious controversy. Banda died in South Africa in 1997 at the age of 101, and his party, the Malawi Congress Party, continued after his death.

While on the surface, Banda's reign seems very different in style—less brutal and with less of a military bent—from Equatorial Guinea under Macias Nguema or Uganda under Amin, the features of the regime type are very similar. Banda's regime has also been referred to as a candidate for the designation of sultanism, primarily because of his eccentricities in personality that he imposed upon his population through a series of bizarre edicts, as mentioned above. All power was derived from Banda who, though a more benign ruler, nonetheless isolated and suppressed his population to a large extent. His manipulation of cadres and imposition of a created national narrative, along with his relocation of the capital city, all serve to buttress claims that his rulership approximates the sultanistic regime type.

African Sultanism: Criteria For Comparison

While it is clear that these cases have many differences, their backgrounds and the conditions in their countries do share some similarities. Similar societal contexts, for example, may have been preconditions for the rise of these leaders to power.[31] In Uganda, the Central African Republic, and Equatorial Guinea, for example, growing economic malaise, the deflation of central political legitimacy and ongoing political strife underlay the rulers' seizures of power, and the same was true to some extent of Mobutu's original grab for power in the Congo. Decalo, who authored a comparative study of the regimes of Amin, Macias Nguema, and Bokassa, suggests that in all of the cases, three common vectors coalesced to produce this type of dysfunctional, or

[31] Other types of preconditions, from personality traits, to political strategies and other macrostructural issues including historical legacies, are discussed in detail in the following chapter.

sultanistic, leadership. Each of the criteria that he suggested—systemic conditions, behavioural contexts, and so-called "idiosyncratic variables", played its role in the origin and sustaining of sultanistic regimes in the various countries.

- **Existing Systemic Conditions**. Economic decay, erosion of authority, social division and strife, and political polarization are some of the features that have been prevalent across many of the cases of African sultanism explored above. The structural background conditions to the pending political upheavals in these countries generally featured an acute deflation of central authority coupled with, or consequent to, a combination of intense social division and strife, economic malaise, and political polarization.
- **Behavioural Contexts.** Second, the behavioural contexts of the coup leaders were similar: Purely personal motivations were at the core of the coups that led to dictatorship. In each case, writes Decalo, "there was a clear, unequivocal, direct, and personal threat to the prestige, status, power, hegemony, and even personal security of the individual who was ultimately to ward off these assaults on his position by seizing power."[32]
- **Idiosyncratic Variables**. Finally, the "idiosyncratic variable" came into play and in each of the countries was similar. Amin, Macias Nguema, and Bokassa all had "seriously malintegrated and force-oriented personalities."[33] These three variables, which came together at specific historical moments--"personalist power-grabs by maladjusted and malevolent leaders in a societal context of intense division and a legitimacy void" may go a long way toward explaining the roots of aberrant personal dictatorship in Africa, an idea which

[32] Decalo, 180
[33] *ibid*., 181. This factor might, however, distinguish those three sultanistic leaders from the others, becoming a more tyrannical sub-category of sultanism.

will be explored further, and with reference to a greater cross-section of sultanistic regimes and literature, in the following chapter.[34]

Interestingly, many of these conditions—as will be shown below, existed in Turkmenistan at the time of independence and shortly thereafter, as Turkmenistan's post-communist regime degenerated into a sultanistic one. Turkmenistan, losing the apparatus of communist rule, experienced a deflation of central authority at the top of the system, and an economic crisis at the same time. The assault, if we can consider it such, on the political position of Niyazov was one that threatened to take away his credentials and position if he did not move to consolidate his power in the absence of legitimacy derived from his position within the Communist Party apparatus. The idiosyncratic variable, as well, is easy to identify in Niyazov's case—he lost his parents at a young age and was raised in a Soviet orphanage, and many psychologists would explain aspects of his behaviour as relating to a personal need to feel loved, respected, and part of a larger national family. Additionally, Niyazov suffers from health problems and, some posit, from substance abuse as well, which may partly be the cause of his erratic behaviour.

Sultanistic Rule in Central Asia

The post-Soviet states of Central Asia present an interesting contemporary area of examination for students of patrimonialism. Hopes that the USSR's collapse would lead to democratization of its successor states have been dashed—nowhere more so than in Central Asia, "where the first decade of independence has been marked by strong authoritarian presidentialism."[35] The Central Asian regimes, while covering a spectrum of non-democratic control from authoritarian to sultanistic, have

[34] Decalo, 181
[35] Cummings, 9

recently been characterized by Ishiyama as "neopatrimonial authoritarian regimes." Ishiyama's classification of 'neopatrimonial' distinguishes the Central Asian republics from other types of authoritarian regime, and especially from corporatist regimes: "while the latter are characterized by the existence of an organic ideology of national unity and attempts at direct political mobilization along controlled bureaucratic channels, in neopatrimonial systems personal patronage, rather than ideology or law, buttress personal authority."[36] While not taking on an analysis of post-Soviet governance, Chehabi and Linz suggest that "Parts of the former Soviet Union could conceivably fall victim to sultanistic tendencies. The persistence of nomenklatura control, coupled with the absence of an entrepreneurial class, has engendered an intertwining of political and economic power that could well lead to sultanism if a leader emerges who has the requisite qualities to raise himself above the party apparatus. Belarus' president Alexander Lukashenko seems to be on the way to becoming such a dictator, as is Turkmenistan's Sapamurat Niyazov."[37]

Niyazov's regime, indeed, presents a fascinating case of a contemporary neopatrimonial, personalist regime that closely approximates Linz's conception of sultanism. While Central Asia is a region rife with personalism, "The entwinement of the growing cult of personality and the process of nation building distinguishes Turkmenistan from its neighbours," and that invites examination under the theories of sultanism.[38] "Although personality cults of a paler hue are in evidence in neighbouring Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, it is Niyazov, or Turkmenbashy the Eternally Great as he is officially known, who has most determinedly confounded the

[36] *ibid*.
[37] Chehabi and Linz 2, 47
[38] S. Akbarzadeh, "National Identity and Political Legitimacy in Turkmenistan," *Nationalities Papers* 27(2): 271-290 (1999), p. 275

profile of new post-Cold War nation-state architects."[39]

Under Niyazov's repressive rule, only his political party legally exists, free media is outlawed, non-official religions are persecuted and the population is increasingly isolated. State structures and governmental institutions are increasingly dysfunctional as a result of frequent personnel reshuffling and a megalomaniacal, idiosyncratic style of presidential rule. The economy, despite a promising natural resource reserve, is struggling as foreign investors and private business are unable to operate in such a corrupt environment and state-run enterprise dominates all lucrative sectors. Grandiose marble buildings dominate the capital, Ashgabat, and beautification projects persist, funded by the potentially lucrative oil and gas sector, yet poverty and unemployment have reached mass levels. Ishiyama, drawing on Bratton and Van de Walle, suggests that Turkmenistan could be labelled a "personalist dictatorship."[40] While not perfectly matching the definition, Niyazov's regime in Turkmenistan closely approximates Linz's ideal type of a sultanistic regime.

Cummings and Ochs suggest that Niyazov's regime is best classified as an "inglorious semi-sultanism."[41] While Turkmenistan shares the personalism, excesses and arbitrariness of traditional sultanistic regimes, there are, argue Cummings and Ochs, substantial differences. They write: "These conceptual categories (sultanism and neopatrimonialism) can be applied to Turkmenistan with partial success. On the one hand, they convey the regime's extreme development of the ruler's discretion and also the decay or incomplete development of modern legal-rational authority. However, various specific features of Turkmenistan's reality do not comfortably fit

[39] Denison, "Laughing," 3
[40] Cummings, 9
[41] *ibid.*, 6

into the model. One fundamental distinction between sultanistic regimes and Turkmenistan immediately comes to mind: the absence of a significant, sizeable… military."[42] While Chehabi and Linz assert that sultanism's unique nature lies in its combination of dynasticism with personalism, dynasticism is "not an option" for Niyazov, argue Cummings and Ochs. He was orphaned at a young age and is largely perceived to be estranged from his family. Rumours abounded in 2003 that his son Murat (residing in Austria, and helping with the family oil and gas business, he reportedly spends millions of dollars in casinos) may be in contact with him or may plan to succeed him.[43] Previously, press reports had suggested that the President asked Murat to stay away from Turkmenistan and that he has never been mentioned publicly as a possible heir. Niyazov is separated from his wife, a Russian Jew who lives in Moscow, and his daughter lives in Israel. While traditional sultanistic leaders seek the support of powerful superpower neighbours to gain legitimacy, "Niyazov has gone to the other extreme" with his promotion of a "permanent neutrality" policy and his avoidance of regional initiatives.[44] He has reportedly poor relations with his Central Asian neighbours, has particularly strained relations over the past few years with Moscow over issues of dual citizenship and Caspian shorelines, and has received criticism from the West on issues of religious freedoms and human rights.[45] Finally, while Turkmenistan shares a feature of traditional sultanistic regimes in its possession of oil and gas resources, there remains a difficulty of exploiting the energy resources due to pipeline issues and regional relationships.

[42] Sally Cummings and Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: Saparmurat Niyazov's Inglorious Isolation," in Cummings, ed., *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 117. Meaningful standing armies cannot be said to exist in post-Soviet Central Asia, with the possible exception of Uzbekistan. Cummings and Ochs conceded that "Instead, the region's internal security services assume this role, and in Turkmenistan, these are firmly in Niyazov's hands."
[43] Author's informal interviews in Ashgabat, November 2003.
[44] Cummings and Ochs, 119
[45] As Cummings and Ochs write, "One of the hallmarks of his rule is indifference to international public opinion, especially criticism of his flouting of OSCE commitments on democratization and human rights." (Cummings and Ochs, 119)

Since Cummings and Ochs made their characterization, however, Niyazov has further entrenched his personality cult. Niyazov's growing cult of personality, from his adoption of the title Turkmenbashy the Great, to the renaming of calendar months and days, to the promotion of the moral code and history text *Ruhnama*, has become increasingly bizarre since independence and particularly over the past three to four years. The following analysis demonstrates that enough similar elements exist to suggest that sultanism is a useful benchmark concept with which to examine Niyazov's regime.

Niyazov's Turkmenistan: Approximating Sultanism

Niyazov's regime closely approximates Linz and Stepan's definition of sultanism when analysed using the four factors of regime classification: leadership, pluralism, ideology and mobilization. Niyazov's leadership is categorized by its arbitrary nature and high degree of personalism. He operates free from legal-rational constraints, and is unencumbered by ideology. Public compliance to his rule is based on a mixture of fear and rewards. There is frequent rotation of positions and the jobs of regime officials derive from their submission to Niyazov. In Turkmenistan, economic and social pluralism, where it exists, is subject to unpredictable intervention from Niyazov. As in Linz and Stepan's ideal type, in Turkmenistan no group or individual is free from the ruler's exercise of despotic power. No rule of law exists, and political institutionalization only happens at very low levels. No real ideology preceded Niyazov's acquisition of power, but over the past several years Niyazov has created a pseudo-ideology, *Ruhnama,* that fills this space. State-sponsored organizations exist for the mobilization of the population but there is no large-scale popular mobilization and in fact the population of Turkmenistan is better

characterized by its apparent apathy to supra-local structures and movements. Repression of free media, non-official religions and non-governmental organizations all stifle the development of a non-state social movement or civil society.

Leadership

Leadership is the most crucial of Linz and Stepan's criteria for analyzing sultanistic regimes. Regime and state are all but blurred in Turkmenistan, where Niyazov rules by decree and personally makes most decisions about policy. Cummings and Ochs note that "state power and national legitimacy are fused" in the president, who "concentrates in his hands both key institutions of modern governance and supposedly Turkmen traditional institutions."[46] Parliament, judicial bodies, local authorities and the Democratic Party of Turkmenistan (DPT) are controlled by Niyazov and packed with his patrons. "Niyazov's subsuming of the roles of state and regime, his unyielding conviction that he alone can and may decide how the state is run and how individuals live, and his intolerance of any form of dissent carry decisive consequences for the political system."[47] Niyazov's domination of Turkmen politics can be explained by three main factors: his background in the Soviet political system; the political vacuum that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union; and most significantly, his use of brutal repression, economic control, and co-option of opponents to oust potential contenders.[48]

Niyazov's background is not unusual for a Soviet bureaucrat on the edge of empire. Born on 19 February 1940 near Ashgabat, Niyazov grew up in a worker's family. Published materials make little mention of siblings, but his autobiographical

[46] Cummings and Ochs, 117
[47] *ibid*.
[48] "Cracks in the Marble: Turkmenistan's Failing Dictatorship" International Crisis Group (ICG) Asia Report No. 44, Brussels, 2003

writings indicate two brothers.[49] His father died during World War II (some sources suggest that he died in the Caucasus in 1943), and his mother and brothers fell victim to the 1948 earthquake that destroyed half the capital city. He lived for a time in an orphanage and then with distant relatives, leaving him unable to weave together the family network that is customary for a successful Turkmen career. He later moved to a Communist Party boarding school and later worked as an instructor at the Turkmen Territorial Committee of the Geological Prospecting Workers' trade union. Some observers suggest that this difficult childhood goes some way to explaining his paranoia and instinctive distrust of those around him.[50] However, lack of family ties was in some ways an advantage in gaining promotion under the Soviet regime, which did not welcome natives with strong links to clan structures and kinship groups. (The Party had experienced serious problems with previous republican leaders whose family relationships had fostered a culture of nepotism and corruption that had escalated to include regularly skimming profits from Turkmenistan's cotton crop to divert from Moscow into the pockets of the rulers and their cronies.)

In 1962 Niyazov joined the Communist Party and studied power engineering at the Polytechnical Institute in Leningrad, graduating in five years with a diploma in energy engineering. Turkmenistan lacked qualified specialists, and as an ethnic Turkmen with technical skills, Niyazov was rapidly promoted. He worked at Bezmenskaya power station near Ashgabat for only two years, leaving in 1970 to work full-time in the local Party apparatus. By the 1980s he headed the industry and transport department of the Turkmenistan Communist Party Central Committee, then became First Secretary of the Ashgabat City Party Committee. He was then invited to work in the CPSU Central Committee staff in Moscow. In 1985 he was tapped to

[49] Saparmurat Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, (Ashgabat, 2001), 29, 41
[50] International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 44

become Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Turkmen SSR, and by January 1990, he had established himself as the undisputed ruler of the Soviet Republic of Turkmenistan by also becoming Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, "the highest legislative body in the republic."[51]

Niyazov is, by many journalistic accounts, a hard worker, arriving at his offices in central Ashgabat at seven a.m. and leaving around nine p.m. He drives himself to work each morning from his residence on the western edge of the capital city through Potemkin-style marble and gold city gates. He participates in no active sports, preferring chess, was the last of the CIS presidents to quit smoking, and reportedly enjoys reading books on history and philosophy, hunting, driving, and walking.[52]

Niyazov's powers of political appointment extend across all political levels– he appoints all members of government, and leaders of academic institutions and industry. The extent of Niyazov's institutional control is evident in the selection procedure for state posts in Turkmenistan. Vetting and selection Soviet-style is still the norm for today's Turkmen *nomenklatura*. Lists of suitable candidates, more often than not members of the DPT, are maintained by the state organ for the Preparation of Cadres. Many contemporary candidates at all levels of government are holdovers from the Soviet period– "In four of the five republican *welayats* the same *oblast* chairmen, who were often the first secretaries of the CPT in their *oblasts*, were (re)appointed *hokim*. In the exceptional case of the Ashgabat *oblast*, now renamed Akhal *welayat*, Jumageldy Amansakhatov, the chairman of the Goktepe *raion* (and simultaneously the first secretary of the CP in that *rayon*) was promoted to the office

[51] *ibid*.
[52] Sergey Davydov, "The Monument Turkmenbashy Dreams Of," *Moscow Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 19 February 2000

of *welayat hokimiyat*."[53]

The bureaucracy has not experienced any real transition: Soviet-trained staff were the natural choice for a regime with no intention of democratizing. In the period following independence, moreover, a number of ministries and state committees such as internal affairs, foreign affairs and national security have been enlarged and the bureaucracy, while less in control, continues to grow. New ministries (e.g. defence and foreign economic relations) have been created. The expansion of the state bureaucracy simultaneously with its decline in power has two probable effects: "The first is the expansion and consolidation of a social group that owes its privileges to its loyalty to the Turkmenbashy. This is an important social trend for the entrenching of the cult of personality. The second is the reinforcement of a general perception of the sanctity of office."[54] The latter factor creates favourable conditions for abuse of office and suggests that corruption and nepotism in independent Turkmenistan are likely to spread more quickly than during the Soviet period.

Niyazov keeps his entourage loyal through a mixture of fear and rewards. The bureaucratic elite is periodically reshuffled, even if many dismissed officials in Turkmenistan suffer no other serious consequences and may well be rehired in some other capacity. Niyazov frequently dismisses ministers on live television, and others have been fined for shortcomings, while the least favoured have been imprisoned. The shuffling of officials "hampers good governance by preventing officials from developing any real job competency."[55] Niyazov demands complete loyalty from his "*nomenklatura*-appointed officials and from society at large. In such conditions, it would be expected that the same attitude be duplicated at all levels of authority,

[53] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 277-278
[54] *ibid.,* 278
[55] Freedom House, "Turkmenistan," 599

perpetuating the culture of obedience. The stability of the cadres, therefore, is expected to make a positive contribution to state legitimacy and the cult of Turkmenbashy."[56]

Niyazov maintains tight control over Turkmenistan using security services that carry out his repressive dictates and crush internal dissent. The main intelligence outfit is the Committee for National Security (widely known by its Russian name, *Komitet Natsionalnoi Bezopastnosti, or* KNB), a latter-day version of the Soviet-era KGB. Until March 2002, the KNB was given absolute power over other state institutions to carry out its work and enjoyed immunity, with no real accountability under the justice system:

> It is believed to employ up to 3,000 members and a much wider network of informers. Its methods of control include the collection of compromising materials on potential opponents and blackmail, but it also frequently resorts to harassment, abductions, imprisonment, torture and assassination by special agents. The accumulation of compromising information is a regular procedure used to control all high-level state employees. Once an official has started to rise through the ranks, secret files which contain genuine or fabricated evidence of corruption, sex scandals, drug trafficking or consumption, are used to threaten any persons who need to be controlled or pushed towards decisions they refuse to make.[57]

However, its rank-and-file agents reportedly are "disgruntled over a leadership purge that began in March 2002 when KNB head Mukhammed Nazarov was dismissed."[58] Nazarov, once considered one of Niyazov's most loyal supporters, was increasingly becoming known as the country's second most powerful man, a designation that likely was discomforting to Niyazov.[59] Some sources suggest that Niyazov believed Nazarov to be planning a coup. Nazarov was later sentenced to 20 years in prison, and between March and June 2002, many others were ousted and imprisoned including

[56] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 278
[57] International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 44
[58] Freedom House, "Turkmenistan," *Nations in Transition*, pp. 591-604, p. 599
[59] R. Safronov, "Niyazov's Latest Purge Reveals a Regime on the Brink," *Eurasia Insight,* 16 April 2002

the security service chief, the Minister of Defence, the Interior Minister, and the head of the border guard. Dozens of other KNB officers were imprisoned during the purge. The KNB, which was formally renamed the Ministry of National Security after the purge, is now headed by Colonel Batyr Busakov, a former deputy head of the Presidential Guard.

The Presidential Guard, which now "appears to be the main pillar of Niyazov's security, is an elite group of around 3,000 former bodyguards and security agents. Another internal security service, the criminal police, is controlled by the Internal Affairs Ministry and works with the KNB on national security matters."[60] The Guard, led by Akhmurad Rejebev, is reportedly well-equipped and well-paid.[61] It is an independent entity and much more than a contingent of bodyguards– this unit has full access to the political, economic, and financial records of the state and is charged with monitoring any political or economic problems that might arise within society or the elite.[62] The Guard, considered now to be the main instrument of Niyazov's control, carries out covert activities on behalf of the President and helps to assure his continued hold on power.

Pluralism

Niyazov in the post-Soviet period has used his power and image to reduce democratic institutions to something of a façade. In June 1992 he was elected president with 99.5 per cent of the vote after an uncontested campaign. In January 1994 he "polled 99.9 per cent in a referendum to extend his period in office. In December 1999 the *Halk Maslehaty* (People's Council) announced that Niyazov had been approved president for life. Modestly, he demurred, saying he would rule only

[60] *ibid*.
[61] Safronov, "Niyazov's Latest Purge," 16 April 2002
[62] International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 44

until 2010, the date of his 70th birthday." According to the 1992 Constitution, Niyazov controls the executive branch: he is president and prime minister, and names all members of the Council of Ministers. His absolute power is "demonstrated in sessions of that body that are broadcast live on television. Niyazov sits, admonishing government ministers, who stand trembling along the wall, taking notes with their heads bowed, clearly in fear of his questions."[63]

Under Niyazov, Turkmenistan is one of that world's last single-party states. The DPT is the sole legal political party and is the successor to the Soviet-era Turkmen Communist Party. Turkmenistan's fifth plenum of the Central Committee of the CPT convened on the 18 November 1991 in preparation for the coming party congress. Niyazov, then First Secretary of the CPT, spoke about the urgent need to reform the party on democratic principles. Soon after, the twenty-fifth congress of the CPT became the launching assembly for the DPT, and Niyazov became chairman of the renamed party, which also dominates the legislature. The perestroika era saw the formation of opposition political parties in many Soviet republics– in Turkmenistan in 1989, *Agzybirlik Halk Kherketi* (Unity Popular Movement) was formed by intellectuals. This small society, with a membership comprised mainly of native intelligentsia, was concerned with environmental issues and linguistic nationalism, issues that resonated with a large part of the indigenous population.[64] The party was short-lived, however, and banned in 1990. Since then, Niyazov has faced little organized political opposition, and the authorities have moved quickly to crush any nascent stirrings of opposition. Interestingly, and uniquely, in Turkmenistan "the native elite appeared to embrace almost all demands initiated by the opposition as its own," a move that likely increased Niyazov's political legitimacy in the early years

[63] *ibid*.
[64] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 272

after independence.[65]

Turkmenistan's constitution, drafted and passed in 1992, outlines the structure of government.[66] While the constitution provides for a bicameral legislature and judiciary, all these branches are in reality just a façade laid atop personal rule. Little political pluralism exists, and in the past several years Niyazov has created new organs through which to exercise and increase his political control. Niyazov, like other sultanistic leaders, has engaged in "constitutional hypocrisy" and created a veneer of democracy to gain some international legitimacy. Cummings and Ochs write that Niyazov "did establish Western institutions, such as a parliament, a government, a court system, supplementing them with allegedly traditional Turkmen institutions, like the *Halk Maslehaty* and the Council of Elders. However, having created these facade institutions, Niyazov largely ignores them...."[67] John Anderson writes of the Turkmen constitution, "Although the draft included reference to a range of legislative and consultative bodies, from the elected *Mejilis*, through the appointed *Halk Maslehaty*– a body reportedly based upon the tribal assemblies of Turkmenistan's past and similar bodies found in Jordan and Kuwait– to elected local councils, there could be little doubt where power lay in newly independent Turkmenistan."[68] Checks and balances are absent under this personalized regime.

Article one of the Turkmenistan constitution depicts the country as a "presidential republic" and gives extensive executive powers to the president.[69] Aside from the executive, the main organs of power in Turkmenistan are listed as the *Halk*

[65] Freedom House, "Turkmenistan," 594-595
[66] As John Anderson writes, however, it is unclear "whether the discussion of institutional design can be applied to the countries of Central Asia where personalist rule is the norm and in which the production of written constitutions cannot be read as entailing the emergence of constitutional orders...." (Anderson, "Constitutional Development," 302)
[67] Cummings and Ochs, 119
[68] Anderson, "Constitutional Development," 302
[69] *ibid.,* 306

Maslehaty (People's Council), the *Mejilis* (Parliament), the Supreme Court, the Supreme Economic Court, the General Procurator, the Cabinet of Ministers, and the presidential *hakims* (prefects) in the regions.[70] Under the constitution, the Supreme Soviet of Turkmenistan became the *Mejilis* and the number of deputies was reduced from 250 to 50 (Art. 62-63). In addition, the constitution provides for the creation of new state organs, most notably the National Assembly (*Halk Maslehaty*), which convened for the first time in June 1992. This body, described as the highest authority in the republic, is presumably based on the unique historical and cultural experience of Turkmens. *Halk Maslehaty* is comprised of the Supreme Judge, the Prosecutor General, members of the cabinet of ministers, 50 parliamentarian deputies, *welayat hokims*, two elders from each of the 48 *etraps* and the President (Art. 48). The assembly meets at least once a year and is chaired by the President, indicating its position as a subservient institution.

The president's complete control over the *Halk Maslehaty* contributes to his exercise of absolute power. Because the *Halk Maslehaty* has veto rights over parliamentary resolutions, Niyazov can effectively override parliamentary decisions. The ruling party's "stranglehold" on the *Mejilis*, however, has ensured absolute loyalty, so there is no need to override decisions. The *Halk Maslehaty* and the *Mejilis* rarely disagree on issues of policy. Both the *Halk Maslehaty* and the *Mejilis* are absolutely complacent with the wishes of the president. They also help contribute to the growing cult of personality, which will be analysed in some detail below. The legislature's excessive promotion of the president allows Niyazov to maintain an air of modesty. The president regularly addresses news media officials publicly and "begs" them not to praise his personality. In remarks at a 13 March 2003 meeting

[70] John Anderson, "Authoritarian Political Development in Central Asia: The Case of Turkmenistan," *Central Asian Survey* 14(4):509-527, 1995, p. 511

with arts and media officials, Niyazov asked them to "please stop praising me and do not thus tie yourselves to this praising ideology."[71] Such displays of humility, however, serve only to increase public praise of the president.

In addition to constitutional governing bodies, Niyazov authorized creation of other institutions that draw on Turkmen culture and traditional sources of legitimacy to buttress his rule. Often, these bodies are for promotion of Niyazov's cult of personality–allowing him to maintain a more modest image. The Council of the Elders (*Yaqshular Maslehaty*) aims to bring together the elders of all regions. It meets annually and is chaired by the President. The *Yaqshular Maslehaty* convenes in a different region each session, reinforcing the presidential message of national unity. While the assembly first convened in April 1990, over a year before the Soviet collapse, its full potential as a tool for nation building was utilized only after the collapse. The assembly has more public relations value than policy value for Niyazov: "In 1994 this assembly received widespread publicity and extensive press attention. The venue for that year's gathering was the city of Turkmenbashy (known as Krasnovodsk until 1993), on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea. The role of *Yaqshular Maslehaty* is significant in two respects. It is an expression of national cohesion, whereby traditional leaders of different regions publicly reiterate their communality and loyalty to the whole."[72] Additionally, this body reflects the Turkmen tradition of respect for and deference to elders, and by extension for Niyazov as head of the *Yaqshular Maslehaty*.

A main measure of political pluralism, of course, is the existence of elections and level of electoral participation. In Turkmenistan, elections are farcical and serve

[71] From evening television program, on *Ashgabat Turkmen Television* Channel One (Turkmen language),13 March 2003
[72] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 276

only to reinforce Niyazov's rule– this mirrors traditional sultanism, in which rulers turn to plebiscites to prove democratic legitimacy. Cummings and Ochs write, "Indeed, Niyazov was the first to introduce the practice of referenda in post-independent Central Asia. Elected president of the Turkmen SSR in 1990 with 98 per cent of the vote in an unopposed race, Niyazov had his term extended in national referenda in 1992 and again in 1994; in the latter case, a purported majority of 99 per cent of the voters approved an extension of Niyazov's term of some office until 2003. These referenda... exemplified Niyazov's exploitation and perversion of democratic values and practices." In the 1992 presidential election, Niyazov was the sole candidate to stand and the government barred any oppositionists from mounting any real challenge because they announced the election only one month before voting day. The 1994 referendum superseded the presidential vote that had been expected to occur in 1997.[73]

Parliamentary elections in Turkmenistan are also no more than a facade. International observers and Western governments reported that the 1999 parliamentary vote was hugely flawed, with Niyazov reportedly chose all 100 candidates and hand picked the 50 winners– although some of the candidates ran on an "independent" ticket, all were reportedly connected to Niyazov's DPT. Niyazov held parliamentary elections in April 2003, this was reportedly conceived as an attempt to purge the parliament of potential bases of support for oppositionist Boris Shikhmuradov, who was the foreign minister when that parliament was installed.[74]

Few open oppositionists are known to exist in Turkmenistan, and political activity is limited to the president's party. However, Turkmenistan has an exile-based opposition largely comprised of former government officials who, following

[73] Cummings and Ochs, 120
[74] International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 44

dismissal or resignation, left Turkmenistan for Moscow or Europe. This opposition falls into two major camps, its division and failure to cooperate presenting large obstacles to its success. The first opposition camp is centred around the now-jailed former Foreign Minister Boris Shikhmuradov (who defected from his ambassadorial post in Beijing in 2001), and the other around former Soviet diplomat Avdy Kuliev. Shikhmuradov's group, the National Democratic Movement of Turkmenistan (NDT), was held largely responsible for the November 2002 attempt on the life of Niyazov in Ashgabat. Shikhmuradov was arrested in December 2002 on Turkmen territory after a Soviet-style public confession (some observers suggest that he had been drugged to elicit the confession), and the Movement has suffered serious blows in the flurry of arrests following the assassination attempt. Formed in November 2001, Shikhmuradov's NDT consists mostly of former government officials who were working under Niyazov in the 1990s.

Kuliev, another former foreign minister, who now lives in exile in Moscow after leaving his post in late 1993, heads the United Turkmen Opposition (UTO)– this group consists largely of intellectuals, technocrats, and other dissidents who fled in the country in the early 1990s, including members of the Turkmen Communist Party and the short-lived *Agzybirlik*. The UTO has called for cooperation between opposition leaders, and in September 2003, Turkmen opposition groups met in Prague for a two day summit to discuss creation of the Union of Democratic Forces of Turkmenistan (UDFT), comprising Kuliev's group, the *Watan* movement, the Renaissance socio-political movement and the Republican Party of Turkmenistan, all exile-based opposition groups. The summit also included participants from Turkmen diaspora communities in Afghanistan and Iran.[75]

[75] Rashid Dyussembayev, "Turkmen opposition united," 1

Public opposition within Turkmenistan, always very limited, is now practically nonexistent. In the early part of the period following independence, there was some limited public dissatisfaction with the regime. Signs of this dissatisfaction included May 1989 riots in Ashgabat and Nebitdag over prices, and price rises in 1992 apparently led to a strike in Nebitdag (renamed Balkanabat).[76] Over the past decade, however, opposition has been minimal, although during the summer of 2002 there were reports of a women's protest outside the presidential palace in Ashgabat, although the women reportedly were taken away by police immediately.

Treatment of prisoners and dissidents shows an absence of rule of law and a disregard for human rights. The judicial branch is largely a tool of presidential control, and dissidents are regularly jailed following trials that do not meet international standards. Niyazov appoints all judges for five-year terms and has the power to dismiss them at will. The government denies that it holds political prisoners, but human rights groups have documented numerous cases of imprisonment on dubious charges. Many cases go unreported, or people are arrested on alternative fabricated charges, often drug-related, or on accusations of corruption. Since the moratorium on the death penalty in 1999, imprisonment in appalling conditions has been the norm; officials are often sentenced to internal exile.

Prior to the recent arrest of Shikhmuradov, the only high-profile political prisoner in jail was Mukhmatkuli Aimuradov, in prison since 1994. According to International Crisis Group reports, people held by the KNB are either sent to prisons or immediately to labour camps where mortality rates are extremely high. Prisoners in these camps are repeatedly beaten and tortured by guards and forced to carry out strenuous work in appalling conditions. An estimated 20,000 people, both criminals

[76] Anderson, "Authoritarian Political Development," 514

and regime opponents, are imprisoned in camps, including camps for women and psychiatric hospitals. In June 2005, Yolly Gurbanmuradov, Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister in charge of oil and gas, the chairman of Turkmenistan's foreign bank, and a suspected potential successor to Niyazov, was arrested on charges of fraud and embezzlement and sentenced to imprisonment.

Repression reached a new peak after the alleged assassination attempt on Niyazov in November 2002. The crackdown following the attempt is "evidence of a growing disregard for human rights and civil liberties. The conviction of opposition leader Shikhmuradov came after a trial that lasted less than one day and that took place just four days after his arrest on December 25. Moreover, Parliament intervened in the sentencing, imposing a life term after the Supreme Court had handed down a 25-year sentence."[77] The government makes a practice of targeting relatives and friends of opposition figures as well; according to Amnesty International, at least 18 relatives of Saparmurat Yklymov, a former deputy agriculture minister, were reportedly detained. The regime accused Yklymov, Shikhmuradov, and other leading opposition figures of "hiring mercenaries to try to kill Niyazov. All told, the regime may have arrested upward of 100 people in connection with the attack, international human rights groups suggested, although officials put the number of arrests at only 48."[78]

Turkmenistan has maintained the Soviet tradition of strong state control over society. Freedom of movement is significantly restricted. All citizens are required to carry internal passports that note their place of residence and any movements into and out of the country. Under international pressure, the government officially ended the requirement for exit visas for Turkmen citizens on 1 January 2002, yet unofficial

[77] Freedom House, "Turkmenistan," 601
[78] *ibid*.

controls are still in place at Ashgabat airport, and some people have been prevented from leaving the country, despite having the correct visas and air tickets. "Within Turkmenistan, traffic police and the army check cars every 50 to 70 kilometres and register the names, passport details and car numbers of all travellers, whether Turkmen or foreign. Increasing checks on foreigners entering the country were introduced in December 2002, and visas made even more difficult to obtain. Social control and the overwhelming dominance of the cult of personality are only possible because they are backed by a huge security apparatus, which uses repression to block any opposition to the regime."[79] A tight exit visa regime was reinstated for a time, starting in March 2002, and on 22 June 2002, Russian citizens living in Turkmenistan faced losing either that citizenship or their jobs and property when Turkmenistan unilaterally withdrew from its Dual Citizenship Agreement with the Russian Federation. In summer 2003, Turkmenistan adopted an amended constitution that centralized control of all three branches of government in just the *Halk Maslehaty*.[80]

Ideology

Turkmenistan, one of the least developed and most dependent of the Soviet republics, was unprepared for the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Economically, it was hugely dependent on subsidies from Moscow, and its leadership was used to fulfilling orders from Moscow, not developing independent policies. When independence was proclaimed (somewhat reluctantly) on 27 October 1991, some time after all the other Soviet republics, there was little certainty about what an independent state of Turkmenistan might look like, with no real tradition of statehood. Niyazov has attempted to fill the vacuum left by the withdrawal of Soviet power with a newly

[79] Dailey, "Gunfire and Repression: A Year After the Attack on Turkmenistan's President," *Open Society Institute*, 2003
[80] *ibid*.

found sense of nation- and statehood. However, the lack of any national tradition of statehood allowed Niyazov to construct the idea of a Turkmen nation around his own personality and background. In the early 1990s, this was accepted and even welcomed by many Turkmen intellectuals because it was perceived as a necessary element of nation-building, akin to Kemal Ataturk's actions in Turkey in the 1920s. Turkmenistan's post-Soviet pseudo-ideology could be characterized as Turkmen nationalism fused with Niyazov's person.

Cummings and Ochs note that, "Personalism, buttressed by an extensive cult of personality, is a second essential attribute of sultanism. In Turkmenistan the president defines and characterizes the Turkmen polity."[81] The so-called ideological vacuum left after the Soviet collapse created the space for a cult of personality: "In weak, young states with limited cultural cohesion and an unformed national narrative, a personality cult grants a leader the opportunity to construct or remake national history and identity... A cult transmits an ideology and spiritual terrain through culture and invented tradition in order to overlay internal disunity and allay external threats."[82] Niyazov's cult of personality has become increasingly entrenched over the past decade and now leaves virtually no part of the country untouched. The past three to four years have witnessed a particularly dramatic intensification of the cult. Essentially, what Niyazov has achieved is a state imposed Turkmen identity centred on his own personal image. Lack of alternative sources of information and the ever-present nature of his personality cult ensure that for a portion of the population this cult of personality serves as an effective means of social and political control. The cult of personality revolves first, around Niyazov himself, second, around his family members, particularly his parents, and thirdly, around his books and particularly his

[81] Cummings and Ochs, 118
[82] Denison, 10-11

landmark moral and spiritual code for Turkmen, *Ruhnama*. As Denison writes, "The personality cult in Turkmenistan represents far more than the realization of one individual's megalomaniac fantasies. Rather it possesses political substance and purpose. The cult has, in fact, a dual strategy: first, it functions as a mechanism to enforce compliance to the regime; secondly, it is deployed to advance a serious political project aimed at forging a national consensus around a shared identity, ideology and historical meta-narrative, mediated through Niyazov's image, in order to construct a national space for Turkmen to relate to each other and the outside world."[83]

A giant golden statue of Turkmenbashy revolves slowly in central Ashgabat, showing the way to the sun from dawn to sunset. His name and image are on each central square of major cities and large villages. Niyazov's portraits cover public buildings and large billboards across the country, and also are on books, newspapers, bottles of alcohol and food packaging. The leadership cult is transmitted through a "variety of media: through public spectacles and concerts, national television, radio and the official press, slogans and portraits in public spaces, art and architecture, on t-shirts, bumper stickers and vodka bottles."[84] The slogan *Halk, Watan, Turkmenbashy* (People, Nation, Turkmenbashy) is everywhere. Towns, regions, asteroids, and plants have been named after him. Even television provides no escape: a golden profile of Turkmenbashy revolves constantly in the upper right-hand corner of the screen. In order to assert his image as irreplaceable, he had thousands of portraits of himself with white hair replaced with one in which he sports newly dyed pitch-black hair, following a successful heart operation.

In 2001 Niyazov codified the new ethics of the Turkmen nation in a spiritual

[83] *ibid.,* 4
[84] *ibid.,* 12

guide, called the *Ruhnama* (Spirituality, or Book of the Soul). This 400-page volume, allegedly authored by Niyazov, is a compilation of Niyazov's personal history, folk sayings, and the history, philosophy and traditions of the Turkmen nation as interpreted by Turkmenbashy.[85] The principal agenda of the book is to legitimate Niyazov's regime and place it at the pinnacle of the historical quest of the Turkmen for independent statehood. Denison suggests that *Ruhnama* is an attempt to deliver compliance through "a presupposed, prepolitical consensus that fuses political community, national ideology and government policy, thereby implicitly denying any space to alternative prescriptions of governance or policy."[86] *Ruhnama* contains a rather loosely structured mixture of Turkmen genealogy, history, personal reflection, "charming homilies and moral injunctions," and is undoubtedly "intended to be a spiritual if not directly religious text."[87] The book has been declared on a par with the Koran and the Bible for its moral value, and has become a key element of daily life in Turkmenistan. In schools and universities, students spend hours studying and discussing the *Ruhnama* to become model Turkmen citizens. Similarly, every work unit must organize public discussion groups at least once a week to discuss and make use of the philosophy contained in the *Ruhnama.* Since 2001, argues Denison, the cult of personality has moved farther away from Niyazov and increasingly centres on the book of *Ruhnama* itself. Pictures of *Ruhnama*, indeed, are ubiquitous in Turkmenistan, and the regime seems intent on making it a national obsession. A new park in Ashgabat pays homage to the book itself and features a large pink-and-green statue of the book, which opens on national holidays to reveal pictures of national heroes.

[85] International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 44
[86] *ibid*.
[87] *ibid*.

While Niyazov's cult of personality is the most predominant feature and element of the new pseudo-ideology, there are other elements, particularly the attempt to define a new Turkmen nationalism that promotes unity and consensus, downplaying tribal and regional discord. In addition, Niyazov has promoted a state-sponsored version of Islam as a strategy for preventing the growth of radical Islam in Turkmenistan, a strategy that has been adopted by leaders throughout the region.

Turkmen nation building in the period following independence has hinged on two major themes: linguistic nationalism and Turkmenization, and the revision of Turkmen history, with a particular emphasis on national unity and cohesion, and rediscovering a past of glory and greatness. At first the expression of a national identity that had been overshadowed by the Soviet identity, Niyazov's policies of Turkmenization have accelerated very rapidly in recent years. Russian and Uzbek schools have been closed and minority rights have been taken away. Traditional Turkmen dress and headdress is promoted and mandatory in schools for children of all nationalities. For a foreigner, it costs $50,000 USD to marry a Turkmen citizen. According to media reports, the genealogy of senior officials and their spouses is checked for three generations to ensure high moral standards.[88] In tune with the policy of "linking national sovereignty and the role of Turkmenbash*y*, the new constitution and its provisions for the 'revival' of alleged traditional designations and structures are attributed to Niyazov's personal ingenuity. The policies of the state, decreed by Niyazov, are claimed to be in conformity with ancient Turkmen traditions."[89]

A large part of this policy of Turkmenization, particularly in the immediate post-Soviet period, was linguistic nationalism, which Kuru has asserted is "the main

[88] *Interfax*, 1 August 2000
[89] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 275

pillar of Turkmen nation building."[90] The Turkmenistan constitution renamed political institutions: "the regional administrative division (*oblast*) and its subdivision (*raion*) are renamed *welayat* and *etrap* (Art. 80). Administrative organs have shed their Russian designations and been given the vernacular title of *hokimiyat*. All local administrators in *welayats* and *etraps*, known as *hokims*, are constitutionally appointed by the President (Art. 81)."[91] Since then, it has been difficult to go to school or get a job if you do not speak Turkmen. When Shikhmuradov was fired from his post as foreign minister, Niyazov cited as a reason for his dismissal his poor knowledge of Turkmen. Niyazov himself did not really know Turkmen but had to learn it in the years immediately following independence.

The government of Turkmenistan has tried to cultivate a religious image for itself as part of the national revival. Kuru suggests that there are two reasons behind this policy: "First, Islam has been a significant part of national identification in Turkmenistan since the Soviet period... Second, having a good Muslim image became a source of legitimacy for rulers and symbolizes their respect for national identity."[92] Like many of the Central Asian leaders, Niyazov took a highly publicized *hajj* to Mecca with his cabinet of ministers in 1992. He has spent huge amounts of state funds to construct large mosques and religious buildings, including a large mosque in Goktepe called *Haji Saparmurat Turkmenbashy* and in 2003, Central Asia's largest mosque in Niyazov's home village of Kipjak. Turkmenistan, home to only four mosques under Soviet rule, had 318 operating mosques by 2003. Many of these, however, seemed primarily aimed at glorification of the state rather than meeting

[90] Kuru, "Nation Building," 74
[91] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 276
[92] Kuru, "Between the State and Cultural Zones: Nation Building in Turkmenistan," *Central Asian Survey* 21(1): 71-90, 2002, p. 83

religious needs, and copies of Ruhnama sit side-by side with the Koran.[93] Niyazov frequently issues public statements in support of Islamic scholarship; in one television segment, for example, he stated that, "If you start to research the period when the Islamic religion was introduced in Turkmenistan, then you will be convinced that it was the Turkmen nation who defended and preserved the Islamic religion. They waged wars not to conquer other lands but to defend and protect their faith. They defended the Islamic religion during the Crusades. We are not sure whether the Islamic world knows about the merits of the Turkmens to protect purity of the Islamic religion."[94]

Niyazov has designed a number of official religious structures to control and oversee the national religious revival. The major body of the government is the Council for Religious Affairs (*Gengesh* in Turkmen, or CRA), under Niyazov's control. Describes as an intermediary organization, this office is in control of all registered religious organizations. It is chaired by a prominent Imam from the Goktepe mosque, and the three deputy chairmen are the Mufti of Turkmenistan, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, and a government representative.[95] While the Constitution theoretically guarantees religious freedom, all religion outside of the government's control is severely restricted in practice, with the exception of two officially registered groups, Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox. In 1991, a Law on Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations was passed to guarantee freedom of religious belief, but this law requires registration of all religious organizations with the Justice Ministry. In 1995, it was amended to require at least 500 members of any registered religion to live in any locality in which they hope to

[93] Author's observations, Goktepe, Turkmenistan, November 2003
[94] Ashgabat Television Channel One, 13 March 2003
[95] International Crisis Group Asia Report No. 59, "Central Asia: Islam and the State," 10 July 2003, p. 35

gain legality. A recent International Crisis Group report on religion suggests that, "In practice, this means that – unlike Sunni Muslims and Russian Orthodox believers – members of the Armenian Apostolic, Baptist, Pentecostalist, Seventh-Day Adventist, Jehovah's Witnesses, Baha'i and Hare Krishna churches are unable to register and are therefore severely persecuted. Naturally, any Muslim community wishing to establish an independent congregation is similarly outlawed."[96]

As part of the campaign of national revival, Niyazov has promoted the dissemination of Turkmen culture through entertainment and dress, above any sort of foreign influences. He has outlawed foreign arts like ballet and opera, instead promoting Turkmen national folk song and dance. He has forbidden the wearing of long hair or beards, and children are required to wear national dress in schools. In 2001, Niyazov said of history and culture: "During the 70 years of the Soviet Union we have learnt a lot about cultures, we know great Western classics, we are familiar also with Shakespeare, French writers, many composers, but we do not know the origin of Turkmens, we do not know our writers."[97] In April 2001, citing India and China's national theatres, he said, "A nation cannot present itself as cultured people by introducing another (foreign) art. We must study our national culture, we must create our national theatre."[98]

Mobilization

The population of Turkmenistan receives a mixture of promises, gifts, and repression from the Niyazov regime, which seeks to induce compliance through a meshing of fear and rewards for regime supporters. "In order to convince the population, the Turkmen state has provided its citizens with free use of gas, electricity

[96] *ibid*.
[97] Ashgabat Television Channel One, 3 April 2001
[98] *ibid*.

and water since January 1993, merely a symbolic gesture, since gas and electricity payments were token during the Soviet era. Another widely publicized, but unfulfilled, promise is the free distribution of bread by January 1997, even though Turkmenistan is dependent on imported grain from Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan and was experiencing bread shortages in 1995."[99] There are regular presidential pledges to double wages and to improve standards of living. In early 1999, he promised to double wages throughout Turkmenistan by 1 December 1999, increasing all wages over two years to improve quality of life and national wealth.[100]

Media, including television, radio and newspapers, are among the most important modes of propagation of presidential policy in Turkmenistan. Media in Turkmenistan are, according to Freedom House, among the most tightly controlled in the world. When not issuing government statements, the three state television channels broadcast concerts of Turkmen folk dancing and songs devoted to Turkmenbashy. On the main television news programme, *Watan Habarlar Geplesigi* (national news), there is "almost no news except for the President's declarations or activities. The programme starts with a good wish and prayer for Turkmenbashy. When speaking about the president, the TV and radio commentators use epithets, such as compassionate, merciful and esteemed."[101] The regime owns and controls nearly all print and broadcast media. Criticism of Niyazov is prohibited, and the president uses the press to help shape the cult of personality.[102] In a public speech, Niyazov stated his views on the role of the television programming: "We should arrange musical shows, games, different programs on TV and radio in order to influence the mind of a person who has just come home from a job and having a pleasant rest. We cannot

[99] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 274
[100] Ashgabat Television Channel One, 12 April 1999
[101] Kuru, "Nation Building," 75
[102] Freedom House, "Turkmenistan," 598

evoke the spirit of people with unpleasant songs of any singers."[103]

Recent years have seen an even greater tightening of controls upon media. In 2002, the government confiscated a print run of a Moscow-based paper, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, because of an article describing the situation in Turkmenistan. Cable television was also banned in 2002 after a Turkmen journalist fled to Moscow in July and aired footage of poverty in Turkmenistan. Russian and foreign language newspapers are not readily available in Turkmenistan. Among the few non-state news sources available to Turkmenistan's population are the U.S.-funded Radio Liberty and the Russian *Mayak* radio station, although these too are beginning to lose ground due to operational obstacles from the Turkmen state. In March 2004, two RFE/FL correspondents were arrested and detained by the Turkmen National Security Ministry (MNB) as part of a campaign of harassment against RFE/RL Turkmen Service Members. Ashyrguly Bayryev and Rakhim Esenov were arrested, the latter under charges of instigating "social, ethnic, and religious hatred" under Article 177 of the Turkmen criminal code. These arrests followed the September and November 2003 abductions of RFE/RL correspondent Saparmurat Ovexberdiev in Ashgabat.[104] Satellite television is very widespread in Turkmenistan and still legal, although expensive for the local population. There have been suggestions of a government attempt to outlaw satellite television, however, and programs from Russia are reportedly censored by a special commission before airing.

Cinema does not exist in Turkmenistan. The film industry is another (albeit weak and unemphasized) arm of the propaganda mill in Turkmenistan. Turkmentelekinofilm, the creative arts group, in 2001 was charged with releasing six additional episodes of the television production entitled "Turkmenbashy– Our

[103] Ashgabat Television Channel One, 3 April, 2001
[104] "Correspondents Arrested, Harassed In Turkmen Crackdown Against RFE/RL", 3 March 2004

Protector." This is a sequel to the 19-episode series "Turkmenbashy– My Serdar (Leader)". The new film is "based on a script written by Kakamurat Balliyev, the Turkmen President's Press Secretary, in honour of the 10th anniversary of Turkmenistan's independence. The plot centres around an American lady journalist who arrives in Turkmenistan. Won over by Turkmenbashy's thoughts and ideas, by his book Ruhnama, she expresses a deep interest in the history of the Turkmen nation and culture, the truth of which was hidden during the Soviet era."[105]

Print media is yet another source of government propaganda. The major Turkmen-language periodicals include *Turkmenistan*, published six times a week; *Watan*, published three times a week; *Galkynys*, a weekly that is the "mouthpiece of the ruling Democratic Party of Turkmenistan"; and *Turkmen Dunyasi*, a monthly that is the organ of the Ashgabat-based World Turkmen's Association. Other Turkmen-language papers include *Adalat (Justice)* and *Edebiyat we Sungat (Literature and the Arts)*. The Russian-language *Neytralnyy Turkmenistan* is published six times a week.[106]

Turkmenistan has only one Internet service provider, which is state owned and controlled very strictly. There are filters on opposition sites, and email is believed to be intercepted by the security services. "State-owned Turkmen Telecom has been the sole Internet service provider since 2000, when the government revoked the licenses of all five private Internet providers. In any case, Internet access is prohibitively expensive for most Turkmen."[107] Most Turkmenistan citizens do not have access to the Internet and, where they do, sites are locked or access is prohibitively slow.[108]

[105] Moscow Komsomolskaya Pravda, internet version www.kp.ru, in Russian, 27 October 2002, p. 7
[106] Freedom House, "Turkmenistan," 598
[107] *ibid*.
[108] Author's observations and informal interviews, Ashgabat, Mary and Dashoguz, 2003-2004

NGO participation is very low in Turkmenistan even relative to its repressive neighbours. Although the database of Washington-based Counterpart Consortium lists 138 NGOs in Turkmenistan, in reality far fewer are operational. NGOs face serious obstacles to operation especially in light of a recent crackdown on their activity; new regulations allow almost total state control over NGO funding, activity, and even property. NGO leaders have been harassed and threatened by authorities. Authorities have banned all public events and have suspended many NGOs. Only NGOs dedicated to environmental protection, student issues or minorities exist, and analysts believe that the new law is intended to break this independent network of public organizations, leaving only state-sponsored groups such as the Women's Union, the Youth Association and the Veterans' Association in place.[109]

Education "is crucial both to indoctrinate national imagination and feelings and to maintain social control."[110] Education in Turkmenistan is declining in quality and in quantity, and educational institutions are largely used to deliver and ingrain regime propaganda. Freedom House reports, "schools are increasingly being used to indoctrinate students rather than teach them liberal arts, math, science, vocational skills, and foreign languages."[111] A series of presidential decrees have decreased the amount of schooling at all levels available to Turkmen students and placed further restrictions on study abroad opportunities.

There are many state-sponsored organizations designed to mobilize citizens behind issues of national identity and to build and encourage national culture. One such organization, the National Revival Movement, was launched in January 1994. According to Akbarzadeh, "This Movement is treated just like other state organs and

[109] Muradov and Mukhametrakhimova, "Turkmenbashy Targets NGOs", 1
[110] Kuru, "Nation Building," 78
[111] Freedom House, "Turkmenistan," 597

is composed of 50 *etrap hokims*, five *welayat hokims*, 53 ministers and deputy ministers, seven regional Imams and a number of state functionaries. President Niyazov is firmly in control as the chairman of the Movement and is aided by his deputy Onjuk Musaev, first secretary of the DPT."[112] Other state institutions that are designed to further nation building are the National Administration for Study, Protection and Restoration of Historical and Cultural Monuments and the World Turkmen Humanitarian Association. The National Management was formed in July 1994 to implement Niyazov's earlier decree. "The roots of the Humanitarian Association, however, may be traced back to the Soviet era, when the organization was a propaganda tool for influencing neighbouring states via their Turkmen minorities. Most Soviet republics had such associations. But the Soviet collapse suddenly conferred great importance on this institution. The October 1991 session of this association was celebrated with pomp and ceremony, with President Niyazov welcoming Turkmen guests from foreign states to the 'land of their forefathers.'"[113]

This chapter has described some of the major attributes and the chronologies of the cases of sultanistic rule from post-colonial Africa that will hopefully provide some insight into the behaviour of Turkmenistan's current regime. From the brutal reigns of Amin and Macias Nguema to the relatively benevolent but eccentric personalism in Hastings Banda's Malawi, these African regimes all share characteristics that place them squarely in the category of sultanism, as the concept is set forth by Chehabi and Linz. Turkmenistan's regime under Saparmurat Niyazov, it is relatively clear, also closely resembles this typology. It will be instructive, in seeking to understand the regime's actions and to make prognoses for the future of Turkmenistan, to consider it with reference to historical examples of similar types of

[112] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 277
[113] *ibid*.

regimes. Comparison with, or at least a reference to, these examples from sub-Saharan Africa is instructive not only for its use in deconstructing Turkmenistan's current political climate, but also in forwarding the growing comparison between Africa and Central Asia on a regional level in the literature on political developments. The next chapter will lay out one major element of that comparison—the historical conditions that may have contributed to the rise of dysfunctional authority and sultanism in areas of Africa as well as in Turkmenistan.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL CONDITIONS FOR COMPARATIVE STATE CRISES

Although comparisons between sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia are accepted now by many regional specialists,[1] differences—from cultural traditions to indigenous economies—between these regions can seem glaring. This chapter considers those conditions shared by these regions that lend themselves to the emergence of personalist leadership. In order to explore these comparatively, it is necessary to isolate some of the factors that appear to be common in cases of sultanistic rule. The debate between structural and contingent explanations here is very salient but unresolved—while intensely personalized leadership almost tautologically depends on the actions of the strongman, there seem to be contexts that can be more or less conducive to the emergence of sultanism. The origin of this most personalized form of rule in most cases can be traced to a combination of personal, strategic, and macrostructural factors.

Personality Factors

The emergence of sultanism, a regime type predicated on the intense personalization of power, obviously cannot be explained by structural factors alone—at best, certain conditions might be favourable to the rise of sultanism in a given country. It is tautological that "personality of the ruler is a key element in understanding a sultanistic regime."[2] Especially where institutions and participatory political cultures are weak, the personality of a ruler plays a tremendous role in his

[1] See, for example, John Ishiyama, "Neopatrimonialism and the prospects for democratization in the Central Asian republics," in Sally Cummings, ed. *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), Mark Beissinger and Crawford Young, eds., *Beyond State Crisis: Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002), G. Gleason and Susan Buck, "Decolonization in the Former Soviet Borderland: Politics in Search of Principles," *PS: Political Science and Politics* 26(3): 522-525, and David Moore, "Is the Post-in Postcolonial the Post- in Post-Soviet? Towards a Global Postcolonial Critique," *PMLA* 116(1):111-128

[2] H.E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanistic Regimes 2: Genesis and Demise of Sultanistic Regimes," in *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 37

rise to power and his style of governance. As Rubin writes of Africa, "There are few, if any, innate reasons why Uganda did not have the good fortune to produce a Nyerere or Tanzania did not just happen to have an Idi Amin instead."[3] Personality, or Decalo's so-called "idiosyncratic variable", makes a difference.

The study of personality in leadership presents certain difficulties. As Blondel writes, "there are still many controversies around the concept of personality itself, since personality refers to what is permanent, and yet slowly changing, in the characteristics of an individual."[4] There is no fully accepted definition of personality or list of attributes that would constitute a personality, though "one can suggest a number of elements which seem important, such as energy, courage, or intelligence."[5] Leadership, overall, seems to be associated with many aspects of human personality, and psychologists have tried to determine the traits that might be more or less suited to leadership of different types, with several positive correlates. Some analyses from the 1930s and 1940s focused on the idea of pathology in leadership, due to questions of imbalance in the personalities of some national leaders. Specific attention has been paid to revolutionary leaders, and examination of the personal and situational conditions for the rise of revolutionaries have shown a variety of common traits—vanity, egotism, narcissism and nationalism among them.

Personal factors, for the discussion of contemporary sultans, can be subdivided into the categories of personal calibre and personal prestige. Calibre is "based in turn on personal attributes that are found in varying degrees and combinations: self-confidence, political shrewdness, ruthlessness, ideological dexterity, oratorical brilliance, administrative ability and effort, military or party

[3] B. Rubin, *Modern Dictators: Third World Coup Makers, Strongmen, and Populist Tyrants* (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1987), p. 159
[4] J. Blondel, *Comparative Government: An Introduction* (London: Prentice Hall, 1995), p. 297
[5] *ibid*.

leadership skills—and luck."[6] While there is "no simple biographical and psychological portrait of the ideal-typical sultanistic ruler," some traits are found in these types of leaders with more frequency than others.[7] Personally, sultanistic leaders tend to be shrewd, morally unscrupulous, distrustful, and vindictive. Many have demonstrated a capacity for deceit and womanizing, as well as streaks of personal cruelty.[8] Any individual who alone rises to supreme power shares an obsession with power itself. Many future sultanistic leaders share a background of limited education, socially marginal upbringings, and upward mobility through accidental channels.[9] As Bailey writes, "their origins very often seem to reveal marginality rather than central and secure belonging in a group."[10] Difficult childhoods and even the experience of being orphaned is shared by several of the leaders discussed in this thesis, leading to speculation about the innate need for a feeling of acceptance and love, even national reverence, to replace a personal void.

Whatever the actual personality, attaining and maintaining power in the contemporary era requires at least a facade of charismatic legitimacy if, as in the case of sultanism, legitimacy is not found in traditional or in legal-rational bases. A principal device for control, beyond repression and material satisfaction of the population's needs, is some type of charisma, which may include media-induced charm. Bailey writes: "if in his actual person the leader has all the magnetism of a withered carrot, that is of no significance if he can afford to pay advertising experts to

[6] Paul Brooker, *Non-Democratic Regimes: Theory, Government and Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 133
[7] Chehabi and Linz 2, 37
[8] *ibid*.
[9] See Chehabi and Linz. While not all sultans fit the mold (for example, Dr. Hastings Banda in Malawi), examples include Amin, Nguema, Bokassa, and others.
[10] F. G. Bailey, *Humbuggery and Manipulation: The Art of Leadership* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 6

put him across to the mass as sprightly and inspired."[11] Creating charisma can entail the creation of cults of personality or pseudo-ideologies to attempt justification of a sultan's rule. When real charisma is absent, a leader "must nourish in others the illusion that he is gifted with superhuman talents."[12] Bailey refers to two relevant styles of leadership that sultanistic leaders may aspire to, at least on the surface: numinous, wherein a leader has superhuman capacities and inspires literal devotion, and familial, when a population reveres the leader like a parent.[13] Bailey's "numinous" style is particularly interesting to the discussion of personality cults– the leader conveys the impression that he is divinity and holds powers and capacities beyond those of ordinary people. The leader, according to Bailey, finds clear advantages in the numinous style-- the relationship of leader-follower is transferred unambiguously to "the realm of the supernatural, where, by definition, anything is possible and doubting is a sin. Moreover, the remoteness of such a leader removes the risk of over-familiarity which attends the familial style."[14] Numenification is not a quality of an individual in the same sense that charisma was in Weber's conception– numenification is not a quality at all but a strategy, "the adoption of a style intended to create or enhance charisma."[15]

Personal prestige, the second category of personal factors, is based on the celebrated attributes of the ruler– attributes which may be heralded for their contributions to significant and celebrated events in the country or regime's history, such as struggles for national independence. The same attributes, however, "may also be celebrated in the sense of being glorified by the regime's propaganda– which is likely to present exaggerated or even fictitious accounts of attributes and

[11] *ibid*.
[12] *ibid*., 118
[13] *ibid*., 9
[14] *ibid*., 91
[15] *ibid*.

contributions, often advertised and promoted by the glorifying personality cult."[16] The term "personality cult" describes a "propaganda/ indoctrination campaign glorifying the regime's leader and making extravagant claims about his personal attributes and the manner in which they have contributed to the successes of the regime and country."[17]

Strategic Factors

Another, related, category of explanatory factors in regime emergence are structural attributes that strengthen a leader's personal position within a regime– such as "control over public powers that are legally absolutist or very extensive."[18] Brooker suggests that these structural-strategic factors are more important than agent-centric explanations in describing the rise of sultanism.

Rubin has suggested that modern dictators distinguish themselves from "traditional" dictators by their reliance on technique rather than ideology. In his view, the twentieth century saw "progress in the art of dictatorship" as leaders of third world regimes learned from the techniques of other dictators.[19] He suggests that many elements of modernization have hindered dictatorship as it was practiced in the past and necessitated development of new techniques of authority for modern dictators. The old bonds of patriarchal loyalty, Rubin asserts, have been disrupted– aspects of modern economies and societies in terms of education, communication, and urbanization have had a tremendous effect on strategies of rule. He writes, "There are fewer peasants who unquestionably accept an all-powerful landlord's authority. Migration to cities and access to radio or schools give the peasants and middle class

[16] Brooker, 133
[17] *ibid*.
[18] *ibid*., 134
[19] Rubin, 32

new ideas and experiences. The fixed nature of power and the inevitability of existing social arrangements become subject to challenge and doubt."[20]

Bailey, in his book on leadership, highlights the organizational structures that a leader needs to control in order to successfully promote his program. He touches on the concept of social capital in his discussion. "The dispositions of followers are obviously connected with the formal organizations through which their lives are regulated. . . Therefore if the leader can shape organizations, he should be able at the same time to shape dispositions and eventually the actions of his subordinates."[21] Organizational arrangements, he argues, are a necessary but not sufficient factor in a leader's control. "No leader, save in the most rudimentary situations, can effectively control subordinates without organizational arrangements, but he cannot effectively control them by organizational means alone."[22]

Government officials and members of the leader's entourage, recognizing the precariousness of positions, grapple for the favour of the ruler in order to stay in power. The staff is generally chosen directly by the ruler, and their positions derive from personal submission to the ruler. As a result, officials have little job security, no independent status, and can be appointed and dismissed at will.[23]

A leader's control of the military and/or official party apparatus is a structural factor that strengthens the leader's position. Military control helps to safeguard him from all civilian as well as military attempts to overthrow him. "Leadership of the party provides him with some kind of control organization which may also have (1) a coup-deterring role, by potentially mobilizing civilian opposition to military intervention, and/or (2) a significant electoral role if his public office formally

[20] *ibid.*, 80
[21] Bailey, 60
[22] *ibid.*, 61
[23] H. E. Chehabi and Juan J. Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule," *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 12

requires an occasional electoral charade. Therefore the strength of this leadership position over the military or party can be crucial.[24] Sultanistic leaders often take care to prevent military coups by maintaining divisions within the military and promoting espionage between branches to protect themselves– some leaders have private militias for this reason; in addition, leaders make use of secret police forces.[25] Family members often play a prominent role in sultanistic regimes; personalism and dynasticism in combination, Linz has suggested, are unique to sultanism.[26] There may be supplementary structural attributes, such as private militias, secret police organizations, or "the regime leader's use of family members and people from his locality, tribe, sect, or other minority group to fill high-security posts."[27]

These personality-related characteristics, however, are more contingent explanations and are not as useful for comparative purposes—discounting side-by-side biographies, which can be interesting if not altogether revealing. I turn to more structural explanations for the rise of intensely personal leadership to search for shared features of the African and Central Asian experiences—with the understanding, of course, that they can be no more than one piece of the puzzle in the explanation, for not all of the regimes in post-colonial African nor in Central Asia have experienced the degree of personal rule that the cases of sultanism demonstrate is possible.

Macrostructural Factors

Chehabi and Linz have examined some of the external conditions that can favour the emergence of sultanistic regimes. These range from economic

[24] Brooker, 134
[25] Chehabi and Linz 1, 12
[26] *ibid*., 16
[27] Brooker, 135

development and natural resources to historical legacies. Cummings calls these macrostructural factors and highlights the relevance of possession of easily exploitable resources whose production is in the hands of one or a few enterprises, substantial doses of foreign aid, interest by foreign actors in 'order' which maintains the existing regime, and persistent crises of sovereignty. The two categories of explanatory variables are macrostructural-resource and macrostructural-cultural factors.

On the resource side, sultanistic regimes are not inevitable outcomes of socioeconomic structures, but historically there have been structures that have helped to facilitate the emergence of such regimes. Rentier states, for example, "in which the regime is not bound by tradition (unlike the oil monarchies of the Arabian peninsula) are thus more vulnerable to sultanization."[28] Economies based on oil, sugar, and copper have historically been particularly vulnerable, and massive doses of foreign aid or loans can encourage corruption, especially unconditional aid. Technological innovation, moreover, may prolong the life of some sultanistic regimes. Continuity of sultanistic regimes can require 'certain modernization of transportation and communications as well as of the military and police organizations and some civilian administrations, to provide funds to sustain the rule and prevent threats to it."[29]

A country's historical political experience might be relevant for the emergence of a sultanistic regime. Blondel writes, "By and large, a dictatorial government is likely to come to power when conflicts among institutions and groups are such that no accommodation can be found because political integration is low."[30] Chehabi and Linz suggest that sultanistic regimes might emerge in conditions where

[28] Chehabi and Linz 2, 27
[29] *ibid*.
[30] Blondel, 72

a country has suffered persistent crises of sovereignty in their political development—that is, where "throughout their contemporary history their independence was ambiguous and often not respected by more powerful neighbours."[31] This has been especially true of Central America and the Caribbean. There is a tendency for cases of sultanism to lie in strategically sensitive areas, a factor which accounts for infringements on sovereignty by foreign powers. Chehabi and Linz write, "Prolonged crises therefore seem to be a favourable but not sufficient precondition for the appearance of sultanism."[32]

In the same way that crises of sovereignty might precede sultanism, colonial legacies might also favour personalism. It is in some sense the "very retreat of foreign power that favours sultanism, since the foreign power leaves behind a partially modernized administrative and especially military apparatus that enables the ruler to concentrate power in his hands."[33] Historically, the legacies of colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa favoured the emergence of personalist regimes. The arbitrary drawing of borders left the newly independent states with few common pre-colonial traditions—that is, no form of traditional legitimacy. The colonial governments—under which the emerging elites in the new states were socialized into politics—were authoritarian governments almost by definition; this is a history that is quite different from those of Asia and the Caribbean (areas that have also had rampant personalism).[34] These colonial states "in most cases created entirely novel institutions of domination and rule. Although we commonly described the independent polities as 'new states,' in reality they were successors to the colonial regime, inheriting its

[31] Chehabi and Linz 2, 28
[32] *ibid.*, 31
[33] *ibid.*, 35
[34] While parts of Asia and the Caribbean also, of course, experienced periods of colonialism in their histories, there are differences between these regions and the regions I am considering—namely, their pre-independence experience of self-rule.

structures, its quotidian routines and practices, and its more hidden normative theories of governance. Thus, everyday reason of state, as it imposed its logic on the new rulers, incorporated subliminal codes of operation bearing the imprint of their colonial predecessors."[35] The search for identity of emerging young states might be a precondition favourable to personalism.

If culture can be said to correlate at all with sultanism, traditional and non-complex populations might be best suited to true sultanistic rule. Chehabi and Linz suggest that "The isolation of the rural masses, their lack of education, and their poverty are probably necessary to ensure their passive submission out of fear combined with gratitude for occasional paternalistic welfare measures made possible by a modicum of development."[36] Religiosity, Bailey argues, may correlate with popular readiness to accept a sultanistic leader's assertion that he is divine. He writes, "If a disposition to accept charisma can be culturally induced, then it must be easier to arouse such feelings in a population that has a firm and unquestioning belief in the divine hand than in one that is down-to-earth, maturely sceptical, devotedly scientific in its readiness to question or devotedly irreverent, and truly convinced that, barring accidents, persons are masters of their fate and captains of their souls."[37]

Each of these factors—personality of the ruler himself, strategies that the ruler employs to maintain power for his regime, and macrostructural conditions—historical and demographic—plays a role in the origin and continuance of sultanistic rule in certain parts of the world. While personality factors, best left to those who theorize issues of psychology and leadership, may be the largest factor in a leader's sultanistic character, macrostructural and strategic factors form the basis of this inquiry. This

[35] Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 283
[36] Chehabi and Linz 2, 27
[37] Bailey, 92

chapter will consider just one common macrostructural factor—historical legacy and experience of colonial rule—as experienced in sub-Saharan Africa and Turkmenistan, and the bulk of this dissertation will examine the strategic use of propaganda and pseudo-ideologies as legitimating discourse buttressing sultanistic regimes in these regions.

Historical Legacies: The Creation of States in Africa and Central Asia

This chapter focuses on one of the macrostructural conditions for the emergence of sultanism—historical political legacies. Historical political legacies, as Chehabi, Linz, and Cummings have suggested, may provide one facet of the explanation of the emergence of sultanistic rule, and the nature of a colonial state in particular might shape the character of the subject state as it gains independence. Transitions from certain types of colonial rule in particular might provide a transitional period in which sultanism is more likely to emerge given the appropriate actors: Jackson and Rosberg suggest that in general, "personal regimes may be thought of as typical of transitional periods, when one institutionalized order has broken down and another has not yet replaced it."[38] In his study of the African colonial state, Young advances the idea that "a retrospective examination of the African colonial state can illuminate some of the frailties of its postcolonial successor and perhaps even suggest avenues of escape from its more burdensome legacies."[39] Although we often refer to the independent polities—both in post-colonial Africa and post-Soviet Central Asia—as "new states", this may be a misnomer; while the states are independent for the first time, "in reality they are successors to the colonial regime, inheriting its structures, its quotidian routines and practices, and its more

[38] Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg, *Personal Rule in Black Africa: Prince, Autocrat, Prophet, Tyrant* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: The University of California Press), p. 5
[39] Young, *Colonial State*, 9

hidden normative theories of governance. Thus, everyday reason of state, as it imposed its logic on the new rulers, incorporated subliminal codes of operation bearing the imprint of their colonial predecessors."[40]

Chehabi and Linz suggest that African sultanism should be conceived as resulting from a "degeneration of authoritarianism," that is, from the degeneration of the authoritarian colonial state. They point to two particular colonial legacies in Africa that favoured the rise of personal rule: "First, these states' arbitrary borders meant that each state's population was a culturally heterogeneous mix of peoples with no common pre-colonial traditions, and so at independence the young states started out with few remnants of political legitimacy. Second, colonial government was by definition authoritarian government, and it was under this form of rule that the new states' elites were socialized into politics."[41] In Africa's post-colonial period, the absence of unifying indigenous institutions left politicians with "the task of governing with their personal power and authority."[42] In many cases, this was a matter of adopting and adapting the colonial state structure and patrimonialising it—making a discussion of colonial legacies indispensable to the study of post-colonial regimes.[43] Berman comments, "From colonial intrusions and African responses emerged the unique linkage under colonialism between bureaucratic authoritarianism, patronage and clientelism, and ethnic fragmentation and competition. The continuity of these institutions, power relations and identities in post-colonial states has shaped the particular character of state-society relations in Africa and the 'politics of the

[40] *ibid.,* 283. Obviously, however, the legacy of the colonial state—while it might be one factor in the political outcomes—is certainly not the only one, nor is the post-colonial climate identical in states that have experienced similar colonial experiences.
[41] Chehabi and Linz 2, 35
[42] Jackson and Rosberg, 22
[43] Thomas Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p.146

belly'."[44] The experience of Africa differs from that of the Caribbean and Asia– two other areas of post-World War II decolonization– in several ways; namely, in the Caribbean, "responsible self-government preceded independence by many years," and in Asia pre-colonial state traditions survived European imperialism.[46]

Although the African colonial experience, as Young has emphasized in his book *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, was unique in many ways, the elements that specifically favour personalism were shared by another region that experienced decolonization late in the game– the states that emerged from Soviet Central Asia. While I do not suggest that these regions are anywhere near identical in terms of their pre-colonial identities, colonial experiences, or moves toward independence, enough similarities exist between the experiences of the two regions to render comparison instructive. In his comparison of post-colonial Zaire and pre-revolutionary France, Thomas Callaghy cites Zolberg's call for a comparative approach to political studies: "I believe that a promising approach consists of comparisons at a middling level of generalization between units that are not extremely diverse, such as contemporary African states themselves, or between them and historical states (in Europe and elsewhere) in which somewhat similar conditions prevailed."[47]

There are some major differences in imperial legacy between Africa and Central Asia that should be noted from the outset, and to a large extent each region has its own set of problems stemming from the version of imperial rule imposed on its population. In particular, "the relatively more industrial and highly educated character of post-Soviet societies imparts a somewhat different dynamic to politics in that

[44] Bruce J. Berman, "Ethnicity, Patronage and the African State: The Politics of Uncivil Nationalism," *African Affairs* 97(388): 305-341 (1998), p.309
[46] Chehabi and Linz 2, 35
[47] Zolberg, cited in Callaghy, 68

region than what obtains in African societies less advantaged in these respects. In spite of the extreme parastatalization of African economies and the rise of would-be integral states on the African continent in the 1970s, the scope and effectiveness of state activity in the Soviet Union on the eve of its demise far exceeded that of most African states or their colonial predecessors."[48] Additionally, there are differences in the nature of the territorial boundaries drawn, issues of citizenship under the imperial state, the nature of the imperial state's ideological project, and the role of the settler populations, not to mention the nature of independence.

However, the similarities in the colonial experiences between these two regions deserve exploration, particularly in light of the very similar types of problems that have plagued the regions in their periods of independent statehood. Beissinger and Young discuss many of these shared problems that, while not unique to Africa and Central Asia, have in combination come to represent the "glaring consequences of the crises of the state" that were "most conspicuous in world politics in the 1990s."[49] These include high levels of corruption, the criminalization of state and economy, disintegrating human services and high levels of cultural tension. Economically, indicators have declined significantly and infrastructures have deteriorated– the decline of official economies has been matched by the rampant spread of shadow economies and barter. And, most significantly for this discussion, these regions exemplify the dysfunctions of authority that can arise from transition periods– each region has experienced a "vacuum of purpose and agenda in the wake of the collapse of pre- independence transformational projects... [and] the rapaciousness and venality of elites, who have stolen the assets of formerly Weberian states."[50] The experience of

[48] Beissinger and Young, 6
[49] *ibid.*, 5
[50] *ibid.*, 22

both regions shows that "predatory and incoherent political authority is fundamentally incompatible with democratic governance", and also with economic development.[51] In both Africa and Eurasia, "the state's ubiquitous and pervasive presence can be juxtaposed with its limited capacity for enforcing rules or generating legitimacy."[52]

This chapter will outline some of the similarities between the pre-independence experiences of Africa and Central Asia.[53] In all cases, the era of domination left residues that confine and control the contexts for political action in the independent states. The chapter will explore the methods of rule in colonial and Soviet periods—including the demarcation of boundaries, the assertion of political authority, participation of native elites, economic exploitation, and social engineering. A brief survey of the nature of the colonial and Soviet periods will be instructive in later chapters dealing with the nature of governance in post-colonial countries in these two regions.

The imperial legacies of the two regions are "crucial to contextualizing the analysis."[54] As Jeffrey Herbst writes, the "analysis of the creation of many third world states is, by necessity, intertwined with accounts of European imperialism and colonialization."[55] With some African exceptions (for example, Ethiopia), neither region had experienced modern statehood in the pre-independence period, and therefore their experiences under the imperial powers were critical in shaping political identities and society and conditioning their emergence as modern states. As Dominic Lieven writes, "Attempting to compare the aftermath of these twentieth-century

[51] *ibid.*, 4
[52] *ibid.*, 10
[53] I take the term "pre-independence" to describe the period of European colonialism in sub-Saharan Africa, and in Central Asia the rule of tsarist Russia and then the Soviet regimes.
[54] Beissinger and Young, 12
[55] Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), p. 22

empires is a complicated business."[56] Highlighting certain features of the regions' pre-independence experiences and the ways in which these experiences shaped the political values, structures and assumptions of actors in the period following independence are is central to this comparison.

David Moore, in an article comparing post-Soviet Central Asia with postcolonial regions elsewhere in the world, considers "how extraordinarily postcolonial the societies of the former Soviet regions are, and… how extraordinarily little attention is paid to this fact."[57] He offers this description of the African colonial experience:

> A historically rich and important set of cultures, of great diversity and sometimes little unity, sub-Saharan African before the arrival of Europeans has a long history of independence, though at times internal strife there is great. Then, an external colonization or imperial control begins at the borders and extends into the centre. Indigenous governments are replaced with puppet control or outright rule. African education is revamped to privilege the colonizer's language, and histories and curricula are rewritten from the imperium's perspective. Autochthonous religious traditions are suppressed in the colonial zone, idols are destroyed, and alternative religions and nonreligious ideologies are promoted. The colonized areas of Africa become economic fiefs….Economic production is undertaken on a command basis and is geared to the dominant power's interests rather than to local needs. Local currencies, if they exist, are only convertible to the metropolitan specie. Agriculture becomes mass monoculture, and environmental degradation follows…. Oppositional energies are… channelled through forms including mimicry, satire, parody, and jokes.[58]

The description he offers applies reasonably well to the post-communist states of Eurasia, and especially to Central Asia—a region that was subject to Russian domination for over a century.

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[56] Dominic Lieven, *Empire: The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 25
[57] D. Moore, 114
[58] *ibid*.

Despite different ideological motivations, as Beissinger and Young write, "both Soviet communism and European colonialism in Africa represented the high point of the tide of state power that swept the world in the early twentieth century, and both experiences involved attempts to impose a new social order through force.[59] Lieven, in his comparative study of empires, reminds us that the long-term impact of imperial rule depends on many factors, such as its "longevity and the extent to which it penetrates, transforms or destroys the societies and cultures over which it rules."[60]

Legacies are best understood as enduring social relationships and not simply transitional phases. The legacies of European colonialism in Africa and Russian and Soviet power in Central Asia are significant. In Africa, "the nature of the colonial state provided a procrustean bed that determined the character of its postcolonial successor to a far greater extent than expected by the independence generation of scholarly observers of Africa."[61] Anti-colonial nationalism in the transitional period soon gave way to the emergence of a new set of elites concerned with reproducing power in the boundaries of the sovereign state. "The enduring force of the reproductive logic of state power imprinted on the postcolonial polity the bureaucratic authoritarian heritage of its predecessor, paradoxically reinforced by more expansive ambitions of state expansion as the presumed agency of transformative development."[62] In Central Asia as well, historical legacies have shaped the current political and social situation. The conquest by the Russian tsars and the imposition of a new ideology by the Soviets after 1917 introduced modernity and the idea of statehood to the region, concepts that were compounded by the Soviet system of ethnic federalism.

[59] Beissinger and Young, 20
[60] Lieven, 26
[61] Beissinger and Young, 13
[62] *ibid.*, 19

The Creation of States, and Nations

One of the basic similarities between the states of sub-Saharan Africa and Central Asia is the fact of their formation and demarcation by outside powers. Politically, the effects of the pre-independence experience in each region were profound. Having no experience of modern statehood, the emerging states in both regions took on the physical boundaries imposed by the imperial power, and in many cases appropriated the bureaucratic structures and constitutional features of that power. Beissinger and Young highlight as an important political similarity "The unusual penetration of pre-independence state power... its relatively recent imposition of bounded political order on complex multicultural populations; [and] its absolutist, coercive character...."[63]

The idea of the modern state took root late in the game in Africa and Central Asia. The imperial conquest of Central Asia was nearly simultaneous with the beginning of the rapid colonial expansion in Africa in the late nineteenth century. The timing of the development of states in these regions is significant, because statehood at the time was conditioned by the historical context. Beissinger and Young write, "In contrast to western Europe, where the modern state evolved over centuries, and unlike Latin America, where the modern state emerged in the early nineteenth century after three hundred years of colonial experience, in both Africa and Eurasia the modern state emerged relatively late and largely at a time when belief in the transformative power of the state was at its height."[64] Periods of state formation in these regions, then, were underscored by the grand transformational projects of the imperial powers, which were rooted in late-19th and early 20th century Western civilization.

The territorial boundaries drawn by the imperial powers in both regions have

[63] *ibid.,* 20
[64] *ibid.*, 20

survived into the contemporary period. While in both regions imperfect borders were imposed by imperial powers, the territorial grid inherited from colonial Africa was much more arbitrary than the somewhat ethnically correct Soviet borders, which were designed to roughly coincide with national divisions. As Anthony D. Smith writes, "Perhaps the main common feature of... colonial systems was the obvious, but nevertheless basic, fact of territorial definition."[65] Lieven writes, "By one reckoning 7,000 independent polities existed in pre-colonial Africa. Creating viable, modern political units was, therefore, bound to be a nightmare. As elsewhere in the world, neighbours were likely to be traditional enemies who did not take kindly to being united in a single state. The colonial-era borders were the product of bargains between the European powers, not of local ethnic or economic realities."[66] Unlike in Africa, in Central Asia, Stalin's divisions were guided by an assumption that recognized nationalities deserved their own political-territorial units. In this way, "Central Asia is unlike most of Black Africa, where state boundaries had minimal ethnic or historical legitimacy, and were derived above all from the continent's division among the European powers into spheres of control. The Soviet ethnographers who attempted to create homogeneous nations out of the tribes and statelets of Central Asia made a real effort to follow ethnic logic and at least had only a single political master."[67] Conflicts reflecting the incongruence of borders and national populations still occur, however, in the post-Soviet period.

Although in most cases the imperial era in Africa lasted less than a century, it was a decidedly transformative stage in African political development. "The colonial state in Africa," writes Young, "lasted in most instances less than a century– a mere

[65] Anthony D. Smith, *State and Nation in the Third World* (Sussex: Wheatsheaf Books, 1983), p. 27
[66] Lieven, 30
[67] *ibid.*, 33

moment in historical time. Yet it totally reordered political space, societal hierarchies and cleavages, and modes of economic production. Its territorial grid–whose final contours congealed only in the dynamics of decolonization– determined the state units that gained sovereignty and came to form the present system of African polities. The logic of its persistence and reproduction was by the time of independence deeply embedded in its mechanisms of internal guidance."[68] Even African social identities were restructured, and sometimes ethnicities and tribal ties were invented, in the colonial period by European colonizers, who drew on pre-colonial social character.[69]

The African continent was effectively partitioned by European powers between 1884 and 1914.[70] From 1875 to 1900, in an "extraordinary moment of imperial enthusiasm, a veritable collective intoxication of colonial expansionism set in."[71] In 1884-85, during the Berlin Conference on the partition of Africa, European powers agreed amongst themselves the ground rules for the partition, and the moment of conquest ended with the outbreak of the First World War.[72] The rules of the colonial game were straightforward: a colonial power must obtain ownership of a territory that would be legally binding within the European system, by proving "effective occupation"–this could be proven by obtaining treaties that were signed by African leaders.

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[68] Young, *Colonial State*, 1
[69] Berman, 311
[70] This period came to be known as the "scramble for Africa," although the gradual process of European expansion that preceeded it lasted roughly 450 years. See Peter J. Schraeder, *African Politics and Society: A Mosaic in Transformation* (Boston: Bedford, 2000), p. 88. The year 1884 is significant also in that Belgian King Leopold II declared that the entire Congo Basin constituted his private domain; also, German Chancellor Bismark declared protectorates over Totland, Kamerun, and South-West Africa (present-day Namibia). See Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1998).
[71] Young, *Colonial State*, 83
[72] The continent was basically repartitioned between 1914 and 1919, and at Versailles, Germany renounced all overseas possessions and turned them over to the League of Nations (mandates for administration were given to Britain and France, and Ruanda-Urundi went to Belgium). See Ieun LL. Griffiths, *The African Inheritance* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 46

The Nature of Colonial Rule

The imperial powers in both Africa and Central Asia (at least the Soviet regimes) had a depth and "embeddedness" that, according to regional scholars, set their experiences apart from those of other colonized regions. The depth of state penetration in these regions, according to Beissinger and Young, is unmatched in modern times. Because of its ideological project, Soviet state penetration exceeded that of the European colonizers. However, "in both Africa and Eurasia, modes of domination effectively permeated and totally reordered their respective societal hierarchies in a modernist image, leaving behind embedded legacies touching multiple domains of everyday life within the modern sector of society: the structure of the economy, the nature of state institutions, systems of class stratification, and patterns of interface between state and society."[73]

The autocratic nature of the imperial state is a point of comparison that will be significant in considering transitions and post-colonial situations. In both contexts, paternalism became embedded in the internal operative codes of the state—something that shaped modes of governance in the post-colonial period. Beissinger and Young point to the "critical role played by violence as a tool of social transformation and control, as well as the general trajectory of pre-independence state authority in the years leading up to independence–away from coercive state practice and toward more localized forms of bureaucratic authoritarianism."[74] This state brutality reached its height in Central Asia during the Stalin years, when purging of native cadres and collectivization became elements of political and social control, as well as a contributing factor to the achievement of economic goals. In Africa as well, autocracy was the essence of the colonial state. A quick extractive hegemony was established in

[73] Beissinger and Young, 27
[74] *ibid.*, 28

Africa due to the highly competitive and swift nature of the imperial expansion. Although governance in Africa varied under different colonial powers, the form of the state at its root was the same—centralized and hierarchical, and arguably a pure model of the bureaucratic authoritarian state.

In Africa, care must be taken to distinguish between the varying methods of administration of the different colonial powers. As Young writes, "The political cultures and state ideologies of the colonizing polities were not identical."[75] The colonial legacies in the new states also varied. Despite differences, however, all of the colonial states were marked by the centrality and dominance of the executive arm and its bureaucratic apparatus, "and the coercive monopoly that it possessed throughout the territory."[76] In general, European powers ruled through structures and intermediaries that they put in place in Africa—"for rule to have substance, African collaborators were indispensable."[77] In general, according to Callaghy, there are more corporatist strands in the French and Belgian colonial traditions than in the British tradition of indirect rule.[78]

French rule most closely approximated direct administration, granting each of its colonies its own governor, budget, and (after 1946) elected assembly. The French policy of assimilation provided that "African subjects could theoretically achieve the status of... citizens if they fully embraced French culture, and in so doing fulfilled a variety of requirements, including achieving fluency in the French language, converting to Christianity, obtaining at least a high school education, and becoming a property owner."[79] Belgian colonial administration was also "extremely centralised

[75] Young, *Colonial State*, 107
[76] Smith, *State and Nation*, 28
[77] Young, *Colonial State*, 107
[78] Callaghy, 18
[79] G. Griffiths, "The Myth of Authenticity: Representation, discourse and social practice," in Tiffen, ed., *De-Scribing Empire: Post-colonialism and textuality* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), p.

and subject to close European supervision, with executive power remaining firmly in the hands of the administration; chiefs were absorbed into the administrative organization at the lower levels. Belgian rule was also strongly paternalist, and sought to arrest social and political change through the creation of a materially prosperous and contented people, educated to the primary level."[80] The British colonies experienced a less centralized form of rule. British rule "not only kept in place, by in many cases strengthened, a myriad of traditional forms of leadership within their colonies."[81] Mamdani and others have argued that all European colonialism in Africa was actually a form of indirect rule, regardless of how the power characterized itself, and Berman suggests that "the most important political relationship in the colonial state was the alliance between European district administrators and the chiefs of administrative sub-divisions and village headmen beneath them."[82]

The subversion of state power, and economic resources, toward personal ends in Africa and Central Asia can be traced to similarities in the pre-independence experiences – "forms of behaviour and modes of alternative authority that, while differing in the two contexts, grew increasingly central to the political process in the wake of independence. For Africans and Eurasians, pre-independence state power constituted a distant and alien other to be simultaneously feared, milked, and deceived–a cause for distrust, self-protection, and booty. These widespread attitudes and forms of behaviour naturally continued into the post-independence period."[83] Colonial administration in Africa, according to Berman, was an attempt to create in the African context a modern idealized version of traditional aristocratic authority in a

97
[80] P. Cammack, David Pool, and William Tordoff, *Third World Politics: A Comparative Introduction* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 18
[81] Griffiths, 97
[82] Berman, 316
[83] Beissinger and Young, 35

state, and a hierarchically ordered society.[84] The colonial states created entirely new political arenas and structures, within and through which all other socioeconomic and cultural changes took place; therefore, it is a natural starting point for inquiry.[85]

However grand the legitimating discourse, the colonial presence in Africa was marked by authoritarianism and brutality, along with, in the early years, sharp declines in health indicators that caused further death and despair for the subject populations. According to one estimate, "Central Africa lost at least one-third and perhaps one-half of its population during the first phase of colonial state rule."[86] The authoritarian political legacy permeated all aspects of life– as Griffiths writes, "a coercive apparatus of police and military forces was... created in every colony with the intention of ensuring local compliance with colonial rules and regulations."[87]

Social Engineering Projects

The extensive engineering of society amongst the subject populations by the imperial state for the purposes of modernization and control is another similarity between the African and Central Asian cases. Not only did the colonial power establish borders and physical parameters for post-independence political activity, but they also created new cultural understandings and structured behaviour—a lasting legacy of the colonizing power. Along with the drawing of borders, "Applying their own taxonomic logic of 'state simplification' to complex, multicultural societies, both the African colonial and Stalinist states embarked on comprehensive cultural classification projects."[88] Features of these programs included internal passports, language reforms, the writing of new national histories and the creation of national

[84] Berman, 305; see also Callaghy, 147
[85] Callaghy, 150
[86] Young, *Colonial State*, 169
[87] I. Griffiths, *The African Inheritance* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 103
[88] Beissinger and Young, 33

intelligentsias.

In Africa, the introduction of European economic and political structures prompted a modernization project that served the interests of the colonial powers and, the colonial powers often believed, were to the benefit of the local populations as well. Social Darwinian notions of racial superiority underscored the European colonial projects in Africa; the idea of Africa savagery was ingrained in territorial governance. Young writes, "Such a premise gave natural rise to the conclusion that the new colonial regime, no matter how harsh and extractive, was axiomatically beneficial to the African subject."[89] Modernization brought far-reaching changes to the social structure in African regions; the introduction of Christianity, educational systems and literacy campaigns, new medical technology and intensive urbanization and other more general technological and cultural influences transformed society. The notion of "trusteeship" underscored most forms of colonial rule in Africa, and in general the colonial state fostered a belief in the civilizing mission toward the native population. As Smith writes, "an educational ideology, in which the territory was seen as a trust to be developed and fitted for 'mature' self-government, could also be used to justify both the retention of the colony and, should it prove burdensome later, its eventual disposal."[90]

Colonial economic extraction policies and forced labour contributed to changing demographics. While the colonial powers concentrated on economic extraction—the removal of valuable diamonds and minerals—African men provided the manpower. Urbanization thus proceeded through force and forced labour (with tribal chiefs and traditional authorities, given quotas to fill, leading villages towards the cities), the appropriation of land by the colonial authorities, the creation of land

[89] Young, *Colonial State*, 98
[90] Smith, *State and Nation*, 30

squeezes amongst the Africans and prompting emigration, and the imposition of head taxes, which had to be paid with the currencies earned through urban work.

As Berman writes, "The social construction of modern forms of ethnicity in Africa is coterminous with the development of the structure and culture of colonialism. The structural characteristics of the colonial state, an apparatus of authoritarian bureaucratic control, and of the colonial political economy, based on African cash-crops and wage labour in capitalist commodity and labour markets, radically, albeit only partially, transformed the structural and spatial organization of African societies.[91] All of these elements of colonial rule were strong in both the sub-Saharan African and Central Asian regions—and produced lasting legacies that may be important in conditioning the post-colonial political climate. The following sections will give some historical detail of the effects of colonial rule in Turkmenistan to provide a stronger background for examination of its post-colonial political climate.

The Historical Experience of the Turkmen

The people today known as Turkmen have a long history that can be traced to large groups of Turkic peoples inhabiting the territory of present-day Mongolia and southern Siberia. In the eighth century a large group of Turkic tribes, referred to in historical sources as the Oghuz Confederation, migrated west into the Syr Darya basin (present-day Kazakhstan) and areas around the Aral Sea. Scholars suggest that the main events in the process of ethnic formation of the Turkmen occurred in the ninth and tenth centuries, when "the invasion of Oghuz Turkic nomads from the east resulted in their intermixing with the ancient seminomadic Iranian tribes."[92] By the

[91] Berman, 312-313
[92] R. Safronov, "Islam in Turkmenistan: The Niyazov Calculation," in R. Sagdeev and S. Eisenhower,

tenth century large elements of the Oghuz had migrated south into areas of present-day Turkmenistan and had adopted Islam, and the term "Turkmen" appeared in Arab chronicles.

The earliest known Oghuz Turks (in the pre-Seljukid period) had a system of governance that differed in some respects from other Turks of the time. There were no *khans*—instead the ruler was known by the more modest tile of *yabghu*. The Oghuz tribes lacked any centralizing element and unity was "alien to the 10th century Oghuz."[93] Because of a lack of unity, V. V. Barthold suggests that the Oghuz *yabghu* ruled only in name. Ethnographers believe that in the early stages of ethnic development, the Turkmen were governed by a military tribal democracy. The elders of matrilineal clans regulated commune life, and "the legitimacy of power was determined by the personal qualities of the chieftains and their responsibility to the commune."[94] Political decisions that held significance to local populations were made at a general meeting of the men by a simple majority voice vote (women being traditionally barred from political life). Issues of tribal importance were debated at so-called *maslakhats* (councils of clan elders and warlords), and a council of elders elected the supreme tribal leader. These early structures have significance even today; as Safronov writes, "The Turkmen society remains to this day based largely on neighbour and commune relations; clan and tribal solidarity; influence of the *yashuli* (elders); worship of holy sites, and belief in magic, superstitions, and rituals reminiscent of witchcraft."[95]

Geiss has defined the type of political order that existed among the Turkmen

eds, *Islam and Central Asia: An Enduring Legacy or an Evolving Threat?* (Washington: Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 2000), p. 73

[93] V. V. Barthold, *Mir 'Ali-Shir, A History of the Turkmen People* (Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1962), p. 96

[94] Safronov, "Islam," 74

[95] *ibid.,* 74

prior to the Russian conquest "acephalous".[96] This, he writes, is a type of organization that

> lacks both leaders and staff of authority. It is politically decentralized and based on a community of law. Order is maintained and enforced by all able-bodied members of the community who pursue rightful force, feud, and resistance to restore the communal order whose rights and claims are perceived as having been harmed. In many tribal societies, feud and strife are often widespread, since every tribesman sues for his claims and does not hesitate to enforce them. Thus frequent raids were not undertaken arbitrarily, but were linked to customary law which shapes legal community structures. Political representation does not exist in acephalous political communities, since political decisions need the consent of its members and cannot be ascribed. Medieval lordship over lands and segmented tribal societies is based on acephalous political community structures.[97]

Turkmen tribes did not develop powerful authority roles for adult males, authority being neither hereditary nor able to be taken by military force wealth or religion. Turkmen society, like other tribal societies, was founded on principles such as respect for tribal elders. Geiss writes, "Turkmen village elders could enjoy some communal authority and get involved in cases of dispute between family groups. Distinguished elders were regarded both as heads of the forefather groups and headmen of the *obas* who represented their group to the outside. In this way, heads of strong forefather groups could also 'lead' sub tribal groups. The office of the group *yashuly* did not imply any special privileges and authorizations, however. The headman had no power to make decisions or to fix obligations of the group, but he depended on its consent. It was the *maslakhat*, the elders' assembly of one or more forefather groups, which deliberated and decided about economic, penal and political matters of the *oba*. The consenting decision of the maslakhat represented the condensed public opinion of the

[96] P. Geiss, *Pre-Tsarist and Tsarist Central Asia: Communal Commitment and Political Order in Change* (London and New York, Routledge, 2003), p. 97
[97] *ibid.,* 98

group which balanced the usurping ambitions of single tribesmen."[98]

Military leadership among the Turkmen was not equated with political authority. Although military chiefs (*serdar*) commanded great loyalty and respect, power ceased after raiders had divided the booty and returned to their own communities.

Because of this lack of political authority, Turkmen used to say "that they were a 'people without a head' and admitted that they did not want to have one, since among them every one was his own master."[99] Instead of political sovereigns, Turkmen tribes tended to follow certain set principles to maintain order—the principles were known as *däp* or *adat*. A basic principle of *däp* was the political equality of simple tribesmen, elders and chiefs. Due to this equality, decisions had to be built on the consent of the group. Decisions of the *maslakhat* (and not of a single leader) were authoritative, since the assembly represented the mutual consent of the group. Nobody dared to disobey the common decision of the *maslakhat*.

The nomadism of the Oghuz Turks is a feature that explains many of the persisting cultural traditions. Soucek points to the nomadic-sedentary distinction as a salient feature of Inner Asian anthropology: "until recently, it was a world of two distinct ways of life: that of the pastoral nomad, and that of the sedentary agriculturalist or urban dweller.... a concomitant feature is that the nomad has in historic time been mostly Turco-Mongol, whereas the sedentary was either an Indo-European or else the Turkicized descendant of Indo- Europeans."[100] The Turkmen have long been portrayed as nomads, but many factors, including the ecological diversity of the territory that they inhabited, historically determined the degree of

[98] *ibid*.
[99] *ibid*.
[100] Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 41

nomadism practiced. While most Turkmen were categorized as *charva* (nomad), some were referred to as *chomur* (settled); however, there was no clear historical division between the two groups. The aridity of the territory generally inhabited by the Turkmen tribes precluded an entirely pastoral nomadic lifestyle.[101] In fact, many Turkmen have long engaged in farming as well as in stock-breeding and some have occupied formerly settled oases– such as the Tekke at Merv– and based their livelihoods on a mixed economy.

The economy of the nomadic Turkmen rested largely, but not entirely, on pastoralism. It combined in various degrees stockbreeding, agriculture, crafts, trade, war and, near the Caspian Sea, fishing. Turkmen lived mainly in yurts and depended mostly on herding and hunting; even those who cultivated land dwelled in traditional portable yurts.[102] The diet of the Turkmen showed similarities to that of other nomadic groups.[103] Pilau, the standard oasis dish, was often made of barley rather than rice and cooked only with fat and perhaps wild carrot; pieces of meat and dried prunes were added only on special occasions. The oasis regions enjoyed melons and fruits, which they dried for year-round use, and those living along the Caspian incorporated fish into their diets. Narcotic use was widespread amongst the Turkmen

[101] Elizabeth Bacon, *Central Asians Under Russian Rule: A Study in Culture Change* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p. 19

[102] These differed from the yurts of the nomads in the Kazakh steppe only in their interior decoration: "Over the felt floor covering were spread woven pile rugs, and the walls were adorned with woven saddle bags instead of felt chest covers. On the woman's side, most of the containers were of wood, metal, or gourd, rather than leather, and there was a horizontal hand mill for grinding grain. Outside the yurt was an oven, a crude variation of that used by the oasis peoples." Turkmen clothing was also similar to that of the Kazakhs, with men wearing shirt, coat, and trousers; Turkmen men, however, preferred black and yellow striped material from Bukhara, and wore the customary high sheepskin hat (*telpek*). Sandals were worn instead of high-heeled boots. Reversible sheepskin cloaks, similar to the *pustin* of Afghanistan and Iran, kept out the elements. Women "favored purples and reds in their clothing, which was often richly embroidered. For state occasions, a sleeved cloak, with the sleeves crossed in back, was draped over the headdress, in the fashion of sedentary oasis village women who used such a cloak to cover their faces when they went out. The Turkmen women, however, did not cover their faces. Their silvery jewelry, which was more elaborate than that of either Kazak or oasis women, featured necklaces with pendant cylinders containing amulets." (Bacon, 52-53)

[103] Bacon, 51

tribes, a trend that would continue, and worsen, through the period of Russian rule.[104]

The Turkmen tribes were notorious warriors, known for their military prowess and mobility.[105] As Bregel writes, "The military prowess of Turkic and Mongol warriors was due to their supreme horsemanship, archery, and physical fitness produced by training that usually began in early childhood and formed one of the basic conditions of the nomadic way of life, but also by a sense of solidarity and cohesion, based on their social system, that surpassed that of the armies of the sedentary population. Thus the military importance of Turko-Mongol peoples of Central Asia was inseparable from their nomadic way of life and social organization. When both began to be eroded in the course of sedentarization, military prowess inevitably declined."[106]

Turkmen violently resisted the attempts to subdue them by the various rulers of Khiva, Bukhara, and Persia; between battles, Turkmen fighters were hired as mercenaries by these states in wars against each other.[107] Additionally, they launched aggressive campaigns and raids against "unbelievers", attacking mainly Persian Shi'a Muslims but also Russian Christians, when the opportunity arose. During these raids, Turkmen captured goods, horses, and people– prisoners were ransomed when possible (generally this was the more profitable alternative), taken as domestic slaves or sold in the slave markets of Bukhara or Khiva. Because of their mobility and paramilitary lifestyle, the Turkmen nomads of Central Asia for some time enjoyed an

[104] Narcotics were often acquired from their sedentary neighbors– according to one source, Turkmen were so addicted to the use of the water pipe (*kaliun*) that they "developed a traveling substitute, a hole in the ground in which tobacco was placed on live coals and the fumes inhaled." They also used a kind of snuff, *gugenas*, made of a mixture of powdered tobacco and lime ash, which was placed under the tongue. (Bacon, 52)
[105] David Tyson and Ejegyz Saparova, *Turkmen Language Project* (Bloomington: Indiana University), p. 23
[106] Bregel chapter in R. Canfield, ed., *Turco-Persia in Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 68
[107] Bacon, 50

advantage over their western and southern sedentary neighbours.[108] However, the military advantage of the nomads over their sedentary neighbours "started to wane as early as the sixteenth century and disappeared in the eighteenth– a result of the rise of a powerful centralized Russia equipped with firearms, and of a China that likewise was beginning to use cannon and to rely on armies, which only a populous, sedentary state could maintain."[109]

Tribalism was a major feature of Oghuz Turkic life, and remains an important dynamic in the lives of contemporary Turkmen. Nomadic society was structured along tribal and kinship lines, and rivalries or open hostility existed between various tribal groups. As Soucek writes, there was no sense of unity amongst the Turkmen as a whole, and "the more immediate loyalty was to the extended family or clan."[110] According to both written and oral sources, there were originally 22 Turkmen tribes (and two others associated with them), all of which traced their origin to a mythical progenitor named Oghuz Han. Some of these 'original' tribes survived into modern times, while others disappeared or merged with other peoples.

Genealogical relationships have played fundamental roles in shaping Turkmen society since the inception of the Turkmen as a distinct ethno-cultural group.[111] The major tribes at the time of the Russian conquest were the Yomut, with a territory extending eastward from the Caspian Sea; the Goklen, living along the Atrek River on the Persian border; the Salor, who were the eastern neighbours of the Goklen, also on the Persian border; the Saryk, whose territory extended along the Murghab River into Afghanistan; the Tekke, the largest tribe today, who occupied the Merv (Mary) oasis

[108] Soucek, 44
[109] *ibid*.
[110] *ibid*., 41
[111] Tyson and Saparova, 265

in the mid-nineteenth century; and the Ersary, just north of Merv."[112]

The structure of the Turkmen tribes has evolved somewhat over time but the basic units remain the same. As Tyson and Saparova write, "A *taypa* usually denotes an 'ethnic group' or 'tribal group' composed of a tribe proper plus other small 'outside' communities or social classes that can be associated with it. *Taypa* includes an acknowledged hierarchy of clans and groups and the use of a 'tribal' name such as Tekke, Yomut, Ersary, etc. According to some scholars, the designation *tire* may be used in a similar but more exclusive way, referring to 'tribe' in the sense of the 'tribe proper,' without including the newer groups that have come to be associated with it. Each of the larger tribes may be further divided into as many as five branches (*bolyum*), each having its own name, with further divisions into clans and other smaller descent groups. Members of a 'clan' (*urug*) traditionally are associated with a specific territory and a shared or acknowledged common ancestry from a 'recent' figure. Still smaller descent groups, of 'subclans,' are known as *tire*, *oba*, *kowum* or a host of other terms according to tribal dialect. In most cases the translation for these terms is 'clan' as well."[113]

Oghuz Turks were also strongly influenced by the various religious currents spreading through Central Asia. Pre-Islamic rituals and systems of belief have influenced the contemporary religious culture of the Turkmen to a large degree. The Oghuz Turks practiced a combination of Zoroastrian, shamanistic, and Buddhist rituals, elements of which are observable in Turkmen culture even today. The

[112] Bacon, 53

[113] Tyson and Saparova, 266. Tyson and Saparova provide the following example of tribal organization: "the large and territorially widespread Tekke is divided into two branches (*utamysh* and *togtamysh*). Each branch has two large clan groups which in turn have two to six subclans. Furthermore each subclan may have up to ten smaller descent groups. The clan groups are usually ranked hierarchically based on seniority in their respective branches. For example, the Tekke structure can be traced back at least several centuries, and there is ample evidence of the inclusion of many 'non-Tekke' groups and lineages into this structure. These 'new' clans and groups are the most junior elements in the hierarchy and are considered by some scholars to be part of the Tekke *taypa* but not of the Tekke *tire*." (Tyson and Saparova, 266)

introduction of Islam to the Turkmen brought also a new set of cultural traditions; these combined with pre-Islamic rituals to produce the type of Islam still widely practiced in Turkmenistan today. Central Asians are by and large Sunni Muslims of the Hannafi sect. (In cities like Bukhara and Samarkand and Tajikistan, Shia Muslims comprise part of the populations; in the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan, the Ismaeli sect led by the Aga Khan is followed.) Although Islam first appeared in Central Asia 1400 years ago, it was not until the ninth century that it gained a steady following in the region.[114] In Khorasan, Transoxania, and Khwarazm, Islam was victorious by 750 when the Abbasids (the second major Islamic dynasty) had taken power. After their conquest of neighbouring territories, in 651 A.D. the Arab armies entered Khorasan (including today's southern Turkmenistan). From that moment, Islam began its "march across the entire region– a march that was by no means unconditionally triumphant or unimpeded."[115] Neither sedentary nor nomadic tribes inhabiting the region were in a hurry to accept Islam– where the religion took root, it absorbed elements of traditional shamanism, Zoroastrianism, and other pre-Islamic native beliefs. It is unclear exactly when Islam was adopted by the Oghuz Turks. The Oghuz in the pre- Islamic period were pagans, as were most other Turks during the pre-Seljukid period. However, *qams* (shamans) and the idea of a central or main deity (*tengri*) "do seem to have played a role in their spiritual orbit." Islam probably had

[114] Roald Sagdeev, "Central Asia and Islam: An Overview," in Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower, eds., *Islam and Central Asia: An Enduring Legacy or An Evolving Threat?* (Washington: Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 2000), p. 7. This was due not so much to any unified opposition to Islam, but more to the incompatible beliefs of local tribes and kingdoms, including Buddhism and Zoroastrianism. During the Mongol conquest of the region, led by the hordes of Genghis Khan, the conquerors, after des troying many of the artifacts and symbols of the Muslim faith, adopted Islam as a political instrument to increase their power in the region. The initial Russian intrusion into Central Asian territories in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was driven purely by imperialist forces and not by crusading or missionary goals of the Orthodox church; therefore, in the early years of Russian rule there was little interference in Islamic practices. Even the local judicial systems, based on Islamic law, were permitted to continue functioning in the pre-Soviet periods of Russian rule (Sagdeev, "Overview," 8-9).

[115] Safronov, "Islam," 73

gained currency amongst the Turkmen by the early 11th century– by 1003, the Oghuz *yabghu* had converted to Islam.

One major influence upon the Turkmen version of Islam has been Sufism, a mystical movement that spread through Central Asia in the late Middle Ages.[116] Sufis were those men who first took steps to bridge the chasm separating individuals from the God of the Koran.[117] Sufism, which involved elements of mysticism, placed larger emphasis on the compassionate nature of the deity and "created an elaborate and multifaceted system of practices to approach the no longer awesome Deity as a reassuring Friend."[118] Sufis in Central Asia eventually founded a number of *tariqas* (religious orders, from the Arabic *tariqa*, or "path"). Unlike orthodox Islam, Sufism did not reject native practices such as nature worship. Sufism appealed to the nomadic Turkmen precisely because of relative liberalism; it allowed for a fusing of Islamic dogma with traditional Turkmen beliefs. These practices, however, aroused hostility from proponents of orthodox Islam. Rituals led by *ishans* (local Sufi leaders) incorporated old traditions like music, chanting, dance– traditions heretical to orthodox Muslims. "Such practices obviously clashed with the precepts of classical Islam as taught by Arab preachers."[119] But among the Turkmen, "Islamic law (the *shari'a*) ultimately failed to subordinate native common law (the *Adat*)."[120] While Sufi *sheiks* (top Sufi clerics) almost never publicly officiated at religious ceremonies, they enjoyed much greater respect than the *mullahs* [in Turkmen society]; this attitude might be attributed to the Turkmen's traditional worship of ancestors, a veneration that was also extended to the Sufis as descendants of ancient religious dynasties.

[116] The word Sufi derives from the Arabic '*suf*', wool, from which woollen robes worn by them were made– hence also the term '*tasawwuf*' for Islamic mysticism.
[117] Soucek, 37
[118] *ibid*.
[119] Safronov, "Islam," 75
[120] *ibid*.

Russian Rule: The Conquest and Subordination of the Turkmen

Incorporation into the Russian empire came late to Turkmen territory, as Turkmen tribes offered some of the fiercest resistance to Tsarist armies, finally capitulating through a combination of tribal bargaining and military defeat only in the 1880s. The Russian conquest, however, brought with it the first real exposure to European culture. While Russian rulers largely allowed traditional Turkmen culture to exist parallel to Russian groups on their territory, after 1917 the Bolsheviks undertook a ruthless and massive social, economic and cultural restructuring. Both the Russian conquest and the Soviet experiment "fundamentally altered notions of personal and collective identity."[121] Shahrani has called these periods a "form of colonial experience" that has had "distinctive, powerful legacies and lasting transformative effects upon the region, its peoples and cultures."[122] While not successfully destroying traditional loyalties, the Soviets did provide a new set of identities that were laid atop the traditional social structures.

Russia's expansion into its contiguous territories, writes Young, was "indistinguishable from colonial conquests by other powers."[123] The Tsarist state, however, "cloaked its relentless expansion in an incorporative imperial idea: the autocracy was ruler of 'all the Russias' (*Rossiiskaia Imperiia*). The czar was not *russkii* but *vserossiiskii imperator*. Thus, although Turkestan was ruled through indigenous intermediaries in a manner resembling colonial administration elsewhere, it was viewed as a simple administrative unit of the state."[124] Young writes, "The sheer mass of the Russian state, with its huge standing army and pervasive bureaucracy, endowed it with a potent capacity for dominating its periphery,

[121] S. Akiner, *The Formation of Kazakh Identity: From Tribe to Nation State*, viii
[122] N. Shahrani, "Central Asia and the Challenge of the Soviet Legacy," *Central Asian Survey* 12(2):123-135 (1993), p. 123
[123] Young, *Colonial State*, 248
[124] *ibid*.

reinforced by the contiguous patterns of its expansion."[125] One of the early motivations for expansion was security– for example, the nineteenth-century "great game" between Britain and Russia is the name given to the struggles of these powers for conquest in Central Asia's steppes and mountains.

Russian encroachment upon Central Asian territory spanned centuries, but the Turkmen tribes were among the last to submit to foreign domination. Turkmen tribes did not submit as a whole but different tribes offered different levels of resistance. The most intense conflicts took place in the 1870s and 1880s, culminating in the well-known battle at Goktepe where some 15,000 Turkmen died.[126] In contrast, the Yomut tribes voluntarily accepted Russian rule, and the Ersary offered sporadic resistance but on the whole cooperated. The Tekke, the largest in population of the Turkmen tribes, put up the stiffest resistance.[127] Under Russian rule, the region became known as the Transcaspian military district. A new railroad linked Turkmenistan to other Central Asian cities, and modest industrial development took place.

Russian migration to the territory of contemporary Turkmenistan also increased during this time; however, the cultures of Russians and Turkmen largely coexisted without influencing each other, at least compared with the later Sovietization. Russian colonizers, motivated by geopolitics, made few systematic attempts to redefine the Turkmen social structures, although limited attempts at educational reform and the fostering of a national consciousness were undertaken. Christianity remained the religion of the colonizers, and there were few attempts to convert the Turkmen. Unlike in other regions incorporated into the Russian Empire,

[125] *ibid.*, 258
[126] As Fierman notes, the Battle of Goktepe in 1881 is significant not only for the expansion of Russian power in Central Asia, but for the massacre by General Skobelev's forces of local Turkmen tribes. See William Fierman, "The Soviet 'Transformation' of Central Asia," in Fierman, ed. *Soviet Central Asia: The Failed Transformation* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), p. 12. This battle and the Turkmen losses will be detailed in a later chapter.
[127] Safronov, "Islam," 76

as Safronov writes, "The two cultures and religions coexisted in parallel worlds, as it were, with virtually no points of contact. A Tsarist administration governed the Russians in the Transcaspian Territory, while Turkmen mainly followed the laws of *Turkmenchilik* (their ancestors)."[128] The Russians only made limited attempts to reform traditional loyalties: "Having annexed Central Asia, the Russians did not attempt to change the Turkmen's way of life but left the *qazi* (Muslim judge) courts and the Adat and shari'a law intact. On the whole, this approach was not consistent with the Russian government's practice in its earlier colonies, which had been to establish more-or-less standard forms of administration and legal procedure. In Central Asia, the local population was granted full autonomy in matters of religion and law."[129]

One of the major changes under Russian rule had both economic and social dimensions– the Russians abolished slavery in Turkmenistan, thus removing a central element of Turkmen economic life and spawning in some cases large-scale societal anomie. As Bacon writes,

> Once Russian forces had subdued these impassioned fighters, the government moved to abolish slavery and the raids for slaves which had been an integral part of Turkmen life. This deprived the tribesmen of an important source of income. In the oases occupied by Turkmens, it placed a new burden on the women, whose labour replaced that of slaves in cultivating the fields. The cessation of slave raids resulted in the impoverishment of the Turkmens. It also deprived many men of their chief interest in life. Henry Moser, who travelled among the Turkmen in 1881, not long after the second battle of Goktepe, commented on the number of men who were turning to alcohol and opium. Some Turkmens were drawn into the Russian cotton complex and, after 1905, into Russian or Jadid (reform Muslim) schools. A majority, however, continued their tribal way of life as best they could.[130]

[128] *ibid.,* 77
[129] *ibid.,* 78
[130] Bacon, 105

The disruption in the Turkmen economy, followed by the destructive battle at Goktepe, contributed to the suppression of the Turkmen that continued into the Soviet period.

The Soviet Experiment in Turkmenistan: Drawing Borders, Defining Ethnicity

The advent of Soviet power in Turkmenistan came about with little involvement from the Turkmen themselves. In the years immediately prior to the revolution and until some two decades after, conflict and uprisings characterized the Turkmen-Russian/Soviet relationship. The most notable struggle involved anti-communist Turkmen groups in armed resistance to Soviet power. As a result, the Soviets did not actually take full control of Turkmenistan until the 1930s.[131]

Regardless, from the outset Soviet domination effected many fundamental changes among the Turkmen—they were forcibly sedentarised and their property was collectivized; Soviet-Russian cultural and political norms became dominant; and, Islam as a cultural-political force was greatly weakened. In many respects, "Soviet rule was the definitive experience for the formation of the modern... identity. It was responsible not only for the radical transformation of contemporary society, but also for the comprehensive reinterpretation of the past– the cultural legacy as well as the historical chronicle– in accordance with the determinist philosophy of Marxism-Leninism."[132] Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone writes, "Soviet impact and legacies cover a broad spectrum including physical change caused by economic and environmental policies, demographic change resulting from migration and social policies, and –less tangible but perhaps more important–socio-political change which has affected

[131] Tyson and Saparova, 23
[132] S. Akiner, "Between Tradition and Modernity: The Dilemma Facing Contemporary Central Asian Women," in M. Buckley, ed., *Post-Soviet Women: From the Baltic to Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambrige University Press, 1997), p. 34

patterns of social and political behaviour and value systems, and has left strong institutional and psychological legacies."[133]

At the national level, a major legacy of Soviet rule was the creation of the conception of ethnicity among the Turkmen. Through the 19th century, as we have seen, Turkmen identities were almost exclusively tied to local clans or tribes, and the religious community. The Soviet delimitation of Central Asia was in part politically motivated; Moscow, in creating nations, imposed a system of controls on ethnic groups. Political motivations included an underlying fear of the Bolsheviks that a broader, more inclusive Central Asian identity might threaten the Soviet state in transnational adherence to pan-Turkic or pan-Islamic trends. However, as Gregory Massell has explained, the national delimitation was also an important instrument of Soviet social engineering at the level of poly-ethnic integration.[134]

Lenin viewed nationalism as a development associated with the early period of capitalism; in practice, however, he supported claims to national self-determination (believing that a true Marxist society would see the dissipation of nationalism and the rise of proletarian internationalism). With the establishment of socialism, he envisioned *sblizhenie* (coming together) and eventual *sliyanie* (merger) of the proletariat of different nations.[135] As Suny writes, "the party's commitment to Lenin's notion of national self-determination and its establishment of a pseudo-federal administrative system—the first in the world with territorial units based on ethnicity—worked to consolidate, rather than erode, ethnic and national cohesion."[136] *Korenizatsiia* (nativization) was the name given to the policy, introduced in 1923 and

[133] T. Rakowska-Harmstone, "Soviet Legacies," *Central Asia Monitor* (3):23-34, 1994, p. 24
[134] G. Massell, *The Surrogate Proletariat: Moslem Women and Revolutionary Strategies in Soviet Central Asia, 1919-1929* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2974), p. 58-59
[135] Graham Smith, "The Soviet State and Nationalities Policy," in G. Smith, ed., *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States* (London: Longman, 1996)
[136] Suny, "Nationalist," 310

reflecting Lenin's fear of Great Russian chauvinism, of promoting the training and development of native personnel rather than Russian or Russified elements in society, as well as promotion of local languages and culture. Accepting Lenin's position, Stalin as People's Commissar for Nationalities developed a definition of nation (*natsiya*) separate from that of the people (*narod*). Stalin considered nations to be based on common languages, united territories, shared economic life, and a shared psychological outlook, together with a common culture.[137] This was reflected in his policy of national delimitation, and Central Asians among others were grouped together strategically to form nations based loosely on these principles. Where commonalities did not previously exist, they were created by the Soviet regime.

Under Tsarist and more forcefully under Soviet rule, ethnic labels were pinned on the previously unaffiliated populations, which gradually accepted these groupings as Soviets attempted to suppress the old forms of group identification on more local levels. Central Asia in the 1920s was delimited into five republics: Kazakhstan, Kirgizia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan; each group was given its own written language, flag, system of administration, and constitution. More than just creating ethnic groups, Soviet leaders laid the groundwork for eventual ethnic clashes by drawing borders without regard (or with calculated regard) to ethnic and linguistic divisions. This created both multi-ethnic communities and communities dominated by minority ethnic groups.

The creation of national literary languages and the alphabet reforms of the early Soviet period were carried out both for symbolic reasons and practical purposes of indoctrination and mass communication; this was an important part of the creation of national identities in Central Asia. The language policies reflected Soviet fears of a

[137] D. Hiro, *Between Marx and Muhammad: The Changing Face of Central Asia* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994), p. 22

pan-Central Asian identity developing, as well as fears of the Central Asian nations relating closely to their Muslim neighbours.[138] Soviets had their reasons for not accepting the languages and alphabets already in use in Central Asia. "The Pan-Turkic language of Gaspirali was rejected because of its potential effect of drawing peoples of Turkic speech together in opposition to Russians. The several national literary languages written in Arabic script were rejected because a broad educational program based on that script might be expected to open doors to the thinking of Persians, Arabs, and other Muslims rather than to the ideology of Soviet Russia. Soviet policy was therefore to develop new literary languages, a different one for each narodnost, ethnic group, which would retard or prevent the growth of Pan-Turkic sentiment and would permit an orientation toward Russian ideas."[139] By banning some languages and promoting others, Soviet planners controlled the power and positions of different ethnic groups.

For the most part, in the early years of Soviet rule, Central Asians continued to identify most strongly with their religious groups, regions, tribes, and other intra-ethnic groups. However, over time the national identities began to seep into the popular consciousness through educational reinforcement and official policies. After Lenin's death, Stalin's concerns about the level of indigenization among the non-Russian republics caused a dramatic policy shift toward greater centralization, cultural Russification, and the repression of non-Russian national elites. The delimitation a decade earlier, however, had already begun to shift popular identity. Paradoxically, "the economic and social changes launched in the Stalin era—industrialization, urbanization and the spread of educational opportunities—far from obliterating

[138] Fierman suggests that Islam was an important factor shaping the Party's policy toward language corpus (the development of the body of the local languages themselves), if not language status (that is, the functions assigned to each language). See Fierman, " The Soviet 'Transformation'", 30.
[139] Bacon, 145

national identities and loyalties, served to strengthen them. The emergence of modern urban elites in the national republics, in which the cultural intelligentsia occupied a dominant and prestigious place, provided critical leadership in the process of national revival in subsequent decades."[140] As Suny writes, "even as nationalist expression was stifled and ethnic traditions eroded by Stalinism, the consolidation of nationalities in the non-Russian regions and republics continued. The non-Russian nationalities not only survived Stalinism, but emerged with new strengths—national intelligentsia's higher rates of literacy, more urbanized and informed populations…. Rather than a homogeneous Soviet people, the Soviet form of modernization produced coherent, consolidated, conscious nationalities firmly established in their own national territories."[141]

Central Asian Experience Under the Soviets

The Soviet system created a *nomenklatura* in Central Asia and used local Soviet leaders to promote Moscow's policies in the region. "Muslim political elites encompassed primarily local functionaries of the state and party bureaucracies. But the roster was much broader, because leadership positions in all social and cultural organizations were also a part of the *nomenklatura* system. Members of the elite had to be fluent in Russian, although knowledge of the language was less essential at the local level (in the administration of rural *rayons*, for example, and in *kishlaks*) than it was at the republic level. Also, it was more important within the party bureaucracy, since it was heavily penetrated by the functionaries of the CPSU central committee (rotated between the centre and the periphery) than in state offices or in social organizations. Political leaders were sometimes recruited from the broader-educated

[140] Lapidus, 213
[141] R. G. Suny, *The Soviet Experiment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 311

strata. Some acquired Russian in the military service, others through education– frequently technical education, especially in agricultural *tekhnikums*. Information available indicates that many came from rural backgrounds, and most had retained strong ties to the traditional local and regional kinship structures. Although the relationship was never explicitly acknowledged, it was clear from constant criticism in Soviet sources of family compacts (*semeistvennost'*) and "localism" (*mestnichestvo*)– which allegedly led to widespread corrupt practices and short-circuited the system of central controls– that traditional kinship organizations have deeply penetrated the Central Asian *nomenklatura* system, just as the *nomenklatura* system has deeply penetrated Central Asian society.[142] Politically ambitious youth had only one road available to them to gain power and privilege. But as a member of the nomenklatura, a young Muslim was forced to compromise and adapt: "The essential condition was the subordination to Moscow's leadership. In time the most able and successful of Central Asian political leaders found patrons at the source of power which gave them leverage vis-à-vis Central Committee control agents stationed locally.... Local leaders usually gained greater leverage when there was a struggle for power in the centre. In the last two decades of Brezhnev's rule, Central Asian leaders became a part of the leader's patronage network, and in exchange for loyalty and support for his policies were given a considerable measure of power in their republics."[143]

Muslim political elites in Central Asia continued to act as bridges between Moscow and the indigenous populations, but therefore had an ambiguous position and were not fully trusted by either side– this led to the creation of local patronage networks. Their positions required that they implement policies that were largely

[142] Rakowska-Harmstone, 32
[143] Rakowska-Harmstone, 32

resented at a local level– success in this was the precondition for political survival. However, in order to successfully implement these policies, they needed to mobilize the local constituency. This led in most cases to the creation of local patronage networks: "The way out of this conundrum was the creation of local patronage networks for the distribution of spoils in return for services rendered. The networks, based largely in traditional kin and regional connections, had several uses: they mobilized the constituency when required; they facilitated the falsification of the indicators demanded in policy fulfilment by the central leadership and served to bypass control agents send from the centre, as well as to cover tracks. They distributed rewards to supporters and punished enemies. Last but not least, they created for the leaders a political power base, which gained in importance as the power of the centre was eroded and local interests and demands came to play a major role."[144]

Brutality was a hallmark of Soviet rule in Central Asia. The transformation of Turkestan was undertaken in many (often devastating) waves, and forcible modernization had brutal consequences for local populations. "Challenged by a widespread, badly organized, but strongly motivated anti-Bolshevik Muslim resistance movement, the *basmachi*, the Soviet Russians defeated the opposition by about 1924 through a combined strategy of withholding food from the starving Muslim population and of applying massive military force. By 1925 the peoples of Central Asia had lost all traces of political autonomy, and Central Asian politics and economics were managed from Moscow and by Russians and/or Russified natives loyal to the Soviet Russian regime."[145] In practice, Soviet nationalities policy balanced force and concessions; "It was necessary to establish at least the semblance

[144] *ibid*.
[145] Shahrani, 126

of independent nationhood among the titular peoples of the Soviet republics in order to give credence, however superficially, to the notion that the Soviet state constituted a voluntary union of free nations, and thus was qualitatively different from colonial empires. This resulted in a policy of dual emphasis– of identification with the Soviet state and with the national group–which was to shape the cultural, political and economic life of all the Soviet peoples."[146] Gail Lapidus highlights what she calls the "ambivalent character of Soviet policy" toward nationalities: "On the one hand, the Soviet state was both figuratively and literally a nation-destroying empire, striving to eradicate the distinctive histories, cultures, economies, and societies of its constituent parts in the name of a universalistic ideology which treated national identities and loyalties as an atavistic as well as threatening political phenomenon. Yet ironically enough, the very decision to construct a federal system on the basis of ethno-territorial structures simultaneously encouraged a process of nation building in which the republics—however arbitrary their origins and boundaries, and however limited their powers—came to represent a genuine repository of identities and attachments that would take on real importance when the old centralized structures began to erode."[147] Bialer describes this duality: "on the one hand it granted to formed nations cultural autonomy, territorial integrity, and symbols of nationhood; on the other hand it insisted on the supremacy of the central state and government and strove for a state of affairs where national separateness and ethnic identity would ultimately wither away."[148]

Soviet Social Engineering in Central Asia

Central Asian Muslims in the early twentieth century were viewed by the

[146] Akiner, 34
[147] Lapidus, ix
[148] Bialer, 192

Soviets as a terribly backwards population. In 1923, Stalin described his view of the social situation in Central Asia: "the present position in Turkestan is the most unfavourable and alarming one. The picture is one of cultural backwardness, a devastatingly low percentage of literacy, isolation of the state apparatus from the language and life of the peoples of Turkestan, a devastatingly slow rate of development.... Turkestan as it is now is the weakest point of the Soviet regime. The task is to transform Turkestan into a model Republic, into the outpost of revolution in the East."[149]

The degree of change attained by the Soviets in Central Asia results from a combination of factors that made Central Asia particularly "ripe" for Sovietization at the time. First, that the project of Sovietization and industrialization took place within the context of a totalitarian state. In that context, "not only were the necessary human and material resources mobilized as and when required, but a unanimity of purpose was achieved through the exercise of the tools of mass manipulation–namely, regimentation, censorship, persuasion and terror."[150] Also, the Soviets were able to achieve a high degree of mobilization in the early years because, in spite of hardship, a sense of optimism and pride in the construction of a socialist society was truly tangible in many regions. That the only points of reference available and the only educational curricula were state-sanction provided a valuable opportunity for indoctrination. Finally, "those who were categorically opposed to the new order took the age-old nomad option of flight, moving in their thousands, with families, tents and flocks, across the still open borders into China, Mongolia, Afghanistan and Iran."[151] All these, taken together, demonstrate the particular context in which the Soviets were

[149] Stalin, "Report at the 4th Conference," 71
[150] Akiner, 35
[151] *ibid*.

able to attain a high degree of change. The most important step of the Soviets for their project of social engineering was their early resort to force, through collectivization and purges of the elite, which cleared the way for their project and eliminated a potentially explosive source of resistance.

Not all converts to Party ideology, particularly in Central Asia, were won over by ideology and rhetoric; under the Soviet regime, dissenters were brutalized, creating a climate of terror that frightened some and destroyed others. Programs of collectivization, de-kulakization, and industrialization had heavy human costs, and neighbours were turned against each other in the Party's campaigns to weed out counterrevolutionary forces. By the second decade of Soviet rule, as historian Stephen Kotkin writes, "The revolutionary dream for a world of abundance without exploitation had become an enslavement of the peasantry and a forced, headlong expansion of heavy industry, with millions of people called upon to sacrifice…."[152] Shahrani writes, "The possibility of any challenge to Soviet installed power was minimized through a systematic series of purges, liquidations and decapitations of potential or actual native leaders, and as a result no credible opposition was ever allowed to emerge."[153]

In the Soviet purges, Central Asian beys were viewed in much the same way as were kulaks. Along with religious leaders, tribal and communal leaders in the 1920s were prosecuted for association, no matter how indirect or limited, with perpetrators of "crimes related to custom in their habitat," including the murder of unveiled women.[154] These impoverished peasants and nomads were classified as "backward," "unconscious," and "irresponsible," as "blind followers of religious and

[152] Stephen Kotkin, *Armageddon Averted* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 31
[153] Shahrani, 126
[154] Massell, 340

communal leaders, as ignorant pawns who were merely used, urged on, and incited to fanatical acts by class-enemies of the Soviet regimes."[155] While elite and leaders fitting these categories were subjected to Soviet show trials, property confiscation, deportation, and death, the masses of peasants guilty of custom crimes were given "educative" penalties.[156] In Turkmenistan, victims of the Soviet purges included not only tribal elite and clergymen, but also new "Soviet Turkmen" working in local administration– it was this group that suffered the heaviest losses in 1937-38. Kaisygyz Atabaev, the First Chairman of Turkmenistan's Council of People's Commissars, and Nebirdai Aitakov, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of Turkmenistan, were arrested on charges of "bourgeois nationalism" in those years, and the total number of victims from the new Soviet Turkmen elite in that period ran into the thousands.

The purges had great effects, both short- and long-term. In the short term, they eliminated leaders whose places were not easily filled, even with the implementation of *korenizatsya* policy between 1921 and 1934. Olivier Roy claims that it took 20 years after the 1937 purges for the system to stabilize to some degree.[157] The purges, intended in part to "frighten and shock the population, to break them and to check the possibility of popular opposition," in fact did just that, clearing the grounds for a dramatic modernization drive that would aim at the restructuring of identity on several levels.[158] Some of the more long-term effects on traditional structures of loyalty will be discussed below.

Modernization: Creating New Loyalties

[155] *ibid.*, 341
[156] Typically labor camp sentences. *Ibid.*, 341
[157] Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), p. 102
[158] Quoted in Akiner, 44

The Soviet modernization of Central Asia was carried out on many levels. To overcome the backwardness that made Central Asia a revolutionary weak spot, the Soviets attempted to eliminate traditional loyalties (namely, clan and tribal associations) and replace them with ethnic and class identities. Soviet policies were also aimed at destroying traditional family structures through the emancipation of women and the introduction of new methods of education. While social capital did take new forms during the Soviet period, partly as a result of these policies, the continuation of traditional structures, and the new forms of social capital themselves, remain significant features of the social landscape of contemporary Turkmenistan.

Central Asia under Soviet rule experienced a huge degree of modernization. Akiner writes, "in effect, the region was wrenched out of Asia and thrust into Europe."[159] Local traditions were repressed or destroyed, and new national identities created to take the place of clan and tribal groups. This process was severe in Central Asia, in part due to the external imposition of new structures on local populations, and in part to the extremity of the imposing Soviet ideology. The populations of Central Asia, underdeveloped both socially and economically, were not the industrialized proletariat classes described by Marx. In addition, they were relatively integrated on a local level, thus lacking in large, politically experienced and alienated groups. Massell appropriately observes, "The drama of modernization in Soviet Central Asia thus arose from a huge gap between the social structures existing and those envisioned; from the lack of significantly disintegrated structures ready-made for refashioning; and from great verve and urgency on one side and a deep imperviousness to manipulation on the other."[160]

[159] Akiner, "Between Tradition and Modernity," 261
[160] Massell, xxi

Undermining Local Structures: the Kolkhoz as a Basis of Identity

To support their policies of identity redefinition at the national level, Soviet leaders worked to undermine traditional structures at the level of the clan, village, and family. Tribal and clan allegiances were viewed as a characteristic of a chronically backwards people and an obstacle to the revolution in Central Asia. The collectivization drives were part of this redefinition of identity; a kolkhoz member was expected to identify most closely with those with whom he lived and worked.

Under the system of kolkhozi, the individual was forced to associate with his collective. Collectives were the basis for a citizen's administrative existence– internal passports, basic social services, housing, and travel were all conducted through the system of kolkhozi.[161] These new cultural divisions were expected to "induce desirable forms of social mobilization and political participation among the minorities, erode parochial orientations, and promoted socio-cultural and economic homogenization as well as political integration of the Soviet multi-national state."[162]

Despite Soviet attempts to do away with existing loyalties, however, the collectivization process itself proceeded largely along traditional lines. Turkmen kolkhozi were typically centred around existing villages or tribes, and attracted extended families and sometimes even entire clans.[163] Because of these trends, the social structure of the Turkmen was reinforced by collectivization, rather than destroyed; some have suggested that the formation of kolkhozes on traditional tribal

[161] Roy, 86
[162] Massell, 59
[163] Bacon records that *kolkhozi* were generally comprised of closely related families from the same tribal kin segment. She writes, "When collectivization took place, families were migrating in the traditional territory of the tribal subdivision to which they belonged, and the small kolkhozes and artels formed in this period naturally consisted of closely related *auls* which normally moved out together in spring and gradually fanned out into nearby pastures. When these early kolkhozes and artels were consolidated to form larger kolkhozes, such a consolidation usually brought together related kin groups by virtue of their traditional sharing of a common territory. In some cases, where one small kolkhoz kin group happened to be rather far afield, it was nevertheless included in the kolkhoz of its closest tribal kin segments rather than in that nearest to it geographically." (Bacon, 135)

territories has actually strengthened tribalism. "The sense of kinship remains so strong in the kolkhoz that nonkin, who are usually skilled personnel such as bookkeepers and truck drivers, remain outsiders."[164] Whereas the nomadic lifestyle separated kinship groups during the winter migrations, "the modern kolkhoz centre brings together many kolkhozniks during the winter months, and children, old people, artisans, and others for a longer period each year."[165]

Because clan and familial ties continued, so too did old feudal relationships, which were merely transplanted into the socialist system and re-composed to fit the new administrative structures. Although each village housed a party cell, most governance at that level was informal self- organization, around a council of elders composed of notable community figures. The council of elders retained such significance in Turkmenistan that the Soviet administration officially revived it at one point, hoping that the elders might use their huge influence to advance Soviet aims.[166] "The kolkhoz head is normally also chief of his tribal kin group, and the *aqsaqal*– head of the extended family– is a person of importance.... almost universally children are trained from earliest childhood to respect their elders."[167]

Undermining the Family: The Emancipation of Muslim Women

Another aspect of Soviet social reordering was an undermining of traditional order through the destruction of values, customs, relationships, and roles upon which family structures were based. The traditional role of women in Muslim society was perceived by the Soviets as the most backward of the traditional practices. According to Massell, Muslim women were seen as a structural weak point in the traditional

[164] Bacon, 137
[165] *ibid.*, 135
[166] *ibid.*, 137
[167] *ibid.*

order, and "through that weak point, it was thought, particularly intense conflicts could be engendered in society and leverage provided for its disintegration and subsequent reconstitution."[168]

Whereas Soviet gender policy in Central Asia is generally known for its symbolic "unveiling" practices, these were restricted mainly to the sedentarised populations of the Uzbek and Tajik territories. For a long time, in fact, tsarist Russian officials and then Soviet planners considered that there was a "nomadic exception" in Central Asia; that is, since nomadic women were generally not veiled under customary practice, they were therefore relatively liberated compared to their regional neighbours.[169] Although travellers and Soviet planners alike heralded the independent spirit of the Turkmen women, especially those of the Tekke tribe, the situation of women in Turkmenistan was not one of liberation: "In Turkmenistan, women faced burdens deriving from Islamic law as well as from the customary law of a patriarchal society. Like other Central Asian women, Turkmen women carried the burden of preserving their family's honour, since shame would taint the entire family of a woman who engaged in sexual activity outside marriage. Women were expected to play a smaller public role than men, show modesty in public and before strangers, and obey their parents and husbands. The Turkmen also accepted various aspects of Islamic law that were disadvantageous to women; polygamy was permitted (although uncommon) and men had the sole right to initiate divorce. In some spheres, such as inheritance law, Turkmen custom was less advantageous to women than Islamic law."[170] Turkmen society was very patrilineal; in a family, lineage depended entirely on male offspring; sons also provided a source of labour and expanded the family as

[168] Massell, xxiii
[169] See A. Edgar, "Emancipation of the Unveiled: Turkmen Women Under Soviet Rule, 1924-29," *The Russian Review* 62 (2003), p. 132
[170] *ibid.,* 135

they reproduced and married. Daughters, whatever their individual value to a family, had no role in the passing of family traditions and were lost to their families when married.

In the mid-1920s, however, the *Zhenotdel* (Communist Party Women's Committee) changed their policies towards nomadic women in general and particularly Turkmen women. Reversing policies and declaring that the Turkmen women were as much if not more oppressed than their neighbours in Uzbekistan where the symbolic unveiling campaigns had provided a lot of support for communist policies on family and gender, the Zhenotdel undertook a massive campaign in Turkmenistan. Lacking something like a veil to base the campaign on, Soviet general policy in Turkmenistan focused on legal reforms and the outlawing of such traditional family practices as bride prices, polygamy, and *yashmak*, the Turkmen tradition wherein a newlywed bride is forbidden to speak in the presence of her in laws for a certain period of time following marriage. But they found this less of a rallying point than the veil in other societies. The problem was that *yashmak* was very different from veiling in its social significance.[171] *"Yashmak* was not simply a form of female seclusion, but part of a cultural system revolving around notions of shame and respect for seniority. Extremely complex rules of deference and avoidance regulated relations

[171] Aside from *yashmak*, the Soviets targeted other cultural "crimes," including the payment of bride prices (known as *kalym* in Russian and *galïng* to Turkmen), underage marriage and polygamy; also Turkmen traditions such as *gaitarma*, a requirement that a bride return to live with her parents for a lengthy period following her wedding. The Soviets took a colonialist attitude of superiority: "the Bolsheviks believed that these customs were the main impediments to women's progress in Muslim regions where women were not veiled or secluded; they were 'remnants of the past,' 'socially dangerous,' and likely to 'hinder the economic, political, and cultural growth of the republic.'" Bride price was a major target of the Soviet assault. In Turkmenistan, this payment– from the groom's family to the bride's relatives at the conclusion of the marriage agreement, was traditionally settled in livestock, although monetary compensation became increasingly common during the Soviet period. "Bridewealth was an essential feature of the Turkmens' patrilineal, kin-based social structure. Upon marriage, a young woman left her father's household and moved to her husband's family's household, taking her labor and reproductive power with her. As in many patrilineal societies, marriage involved a payment from the groom's family to the bride's family, representing compensation for their loss of rights over their daughter and her future children."

within a Turkmen household."[172]

The Repression and Persistence of Central Asian Islam

As discussed above, pre-Soviet social networks in Central Asia had rested largely upon religious structures. For many citizens in Central Asia, Islam is the main component of self-identity, even more than regional and linguistic affiliations and even ahead of familial and tribal ties. Safronov has noted that through the Soviet period, "Islam remained one of the chief indicators of the Turkmen's social self-identification."[173] Islam has also historically been the main force for social and political organization in the region, at least until the early years of Soviet rule.

The Bolsheviks brought with them a new ideology intolerant of established religious faiths, and undertook an attack on Islamic practice in the region. Although all religions were antithetical to Soviet communism, Islam was viewed as particularly backward and reactionary and as a threat to Soviet rule, largely because of the history of the Basmachis and other rebellious Islamic groups. Soviet policies were devastating to Central Asian Islam. Leaders converted mosques into workshops and banned religious ceremonies and services. After a brief period of religious appeasement policies during World War II, when Stalin established four Islamic spiritual directorates to allow Moscow to control the Muslim population, religious oppression continued. The last anti- Muslim campaign came under Gorbachev; his program of perestroika pitted Islam as "the enemy of modernization and a rallying

[172] Edgar, "Emancipation," 137. A new bride was required to avoid all direct contact with in-laws, both male and female, who were older than her husband. In their presence, she covered her mouth with the end of a headscarf and did not speak or eat. With time, and especially after she had children, some of the strictures were relaxed, but with more senior individuals (especially older males) the rules of avoidance remained inflexible. Thus, a woman might experience a lifetime of marriage without ever speaking directly to her father-in-law. Young bridegrooms faced a similar prohibition on speaking to their elder in-laws, but the burden on women was greater since the young married couple customarily lived with the husband's family.

[173] Safronov

point for anti-Russian feelings amongst Central Asia's ethnic groups."[174]

Rashid writes, "Islam played a key role in sustaining the clan, regional, and ethnic solidarity amongst the people of Central Asia."[175] Unofficial Islam continued throughout the Soviet era. Community donations allowed illegal mullahs and fakirs to carry religious rites. Well-organized Sufis produced widely-circulated *samizdat* literature, and even within Communist parties, some officials personally hired mullahs to perform Islamic rites for births, deaths, and weddings. Women, by serving and maintaining the Sufi shrines, played a large role in the sustenance of Islam throughout this period. The "explosion" of Islam at the time of independence, then, was due to the fact that "Islam had never disappeared, not even during the worst repression of the Soviet era. The more the Soviets tried to stamp it out, the more it spread throughout Central Asia as an act of ethnic and regional as well as religious resistance."[176]

In practice, virtually every Turkmen Communist Party official followed *adat* (or *däp*) law in his private life, celebrated the traditional religious holidays in a semi-secret fashion, and circumcised his sons. As Safronov writes, "Whenever a party official was persecuted for religious practice, the charges were, as a rule, a pretext to settle personal scores or to topple a rival in the struggle for power. The Muslim customs, traditions, and way of life on the whole remained unaffected by Soviet rule, and the values of *adat* law remained largely intact. Soviet officials did not make any serious attempt to eradicate the Muslim way of life and tribal-clan relations. Even when authorities launched such campaigns from time to time, such moves usually

[174] Hunter, 39
[175] Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 42
[176] Throughout the Soviet era, Islam existed underground as a form of pseudo-civil society in Central Asia. At the time of independence, millions of Central Asians jumped at the chance to openly embrace Islam as a defining characteristic of their identity.

brought no results."[177]

Education and Urbanization

Under the Soviet system, educational reforms from the tsarist period continued and expanded to a great extent. Soviets introduced modern forms of education to the region to take the place of traditional Islamic education, a practice not always immediately accepted by residents. The Soviet campaign for mass literacy and education was highly successful– Soviet policymakers reached their goal of full literacy in Central Asia by the early 1940s, a remarkable change from the seven percent rate of literacy in 1926. Beyond literacy rates, the Soviets succeeded in creating a large network of schools, including boarding facilities for rural-based students. The shift from an orally transmitted culture to book-learning and widespread literacy fundamentally changed the outlook of the Turkmen. As Akiner has written of the Kazakhs, "within scarcely more than a generation, a people whose world had formerly been bounded by the limits of personal experience suddenly found their horizons infinitely expanded. Knowledge was no longer strictly related to the struggle for survival: it now served to make sense of a larger, more complex society."[178] Literacy facilitated political indoctrination by opening channels for ideological propaganda; it also heightened a sense of national identity since "as terms of reference widened, so, too, it became both possible and necessary to locate the community in a broader spatial and chronological framework. At school, legend was replaced by 'proper' scholarly histories, furnished with the confidence-inspiring paraphernalia of dates, statistics and references; maps traced precise contours and specific geographic

[177] Safronov, "Islam," 80
[178] Akiner, 41

features...."[179]

Many consider urbanization to be a positive legacy as a form of modernization, along with industrialization. Roy argues, however, that there was actually a low rate of urbanization because there was not much emigration to the north or rural migration to towns.[180] Because there was no architectural tradition, "the psychological impact of the new constructions in concrete, steel and glass was far greater here than in settled regions. The broad, asphalted streets and solid, multi-storied buildings, emblazoned with huge symbols and slogans, proclaimed the dawning of an age that self- confidently, brashly, rejected the fragile, uncertain existence of the past."[181]

The Bolsheviks sent Russian cadres sent into most of the USSR's non-Russian territories (except Armenia and Georgia), where they were privileged and remained power proxies for the Moscow-based leadership. Large-scale migrations, beginning in late 1920s, shifted the region's demography to the lasting disadvantage of indigenous peoples, radically changing the population distribution. Although this was even more pronounced in Kazakh and Kyrgyz territories, where at independence titular nationalities found themselves to be minorities in their homelands, Russian migration was also a large factor in Turkmenistan. According to Rakowska-Harmstone, the "peak" of colonization "was reached by the end of the 1950s and was reflected in the 1959 population census. Russians and Ukrainians living in Central Asia numbered 7.2 million people (6.2 million Russians and 1 million Ukrainians), an increase of 5 million over 1920, and they accounted for almost one-third (31.5 percent) of the population of the five republics."[182] Urbanization has a dark side as well– in many

[179] *ibid*.
[180] Roy, 83
[181] Akiner, 42
[182] Rakowska-Harmstone, 27. The Russians were, however, concentrated largely in Kazakhstan and

cases it leads to social deviance; economic and political discrepancies are more visible in cities, producing mounting discontent. Many Soviet citizens expressed material dissatisfaction and frustration through a host of prevalent social problems, including low work productivity, high turnover and absenteeism, and rising alcoholism. Under many conceptions, these social pathologies became central to the image of the Soviet system. Dissident Vladimir Bukovskii remarked that to him, proletarian culture was "no mystical secret, but drunkenness, brawling, knife fights, obscenity, and chewing sunflower seeds."[183] In the second Novosibirsk Report in 1983, Tatiana Zaslavskaia reported that the inert society needed to free itself from lethargy and alcoholic stupor. This form of discontent in part arose from the inflexibility of the system: Soviet society had achieved a high degree of education and modernization, but there were not enough jobs for the population, leaving skilled workers with dull work and poor living conditions. One Soviet citizen, M.F. Kharkov, wrote to Gorbachev to tell of her son, who was "a high-class specialist, yet he lives like a tramp."[184] Turkmenistan in particular developed serious social problems and was the only Soviet republic with a recognized problem of narcotic addiction.[185]

Formation of Turkmenistan's Party Elite

During the Soviet era, Turkmenistan's elite was socialized into the political system in an authoritarian, Soviet style, entailed the creation of a highly Russified intelligentsia and political elite. As Al-Bassam writes, "During the 1930s, the Turkmen intelligentsia was most active in demanding political autonomy and a new

increasingly in Kyrgyzstan, pushing the titular nations there into minority positions. In the late 1950s in Kazakhstan, Kazakhs constituted just 30 percent of the population of their republic, and they were outnumbered by Russians.

[183] Quoted in Suny, *The Soviet Experiment*, 431

[184] In R. McKay, ed., *Letters to Gorbachev* (London: Michael Joseph, 1991), 8

[185] Bacon, 50

language policy. But, as early as 1926, Turkmen made up less than a third of their national intelligentsia."[186] This was probably due to the resistance from some ethnic Turkmen to Communism—although Turkmen did participate in the Bolshevik Revolution, even Soviet sources admitted the "continued existence and activity of nationalist organizations in Turkmenistan through the 1920s and 1930s…. Soviet policies resulted in open rebellion in 1928-32; two ministers of the Turkmenistan government were charged with supporting the rebels and with seeking the establishment of an independent Turkmenian State under British protection."[187] Soviets purged native Turkmen from intelligentsia and governing structures as early as 1934, eliminating must of their already-limited influence on politics, and then purged the Communist Party of many native Turkmen. Bohr writes, "Soviet authorities began purging Turkmen intellectuals on a large scale in 1934, soon widening the purges to include Turkmen government leaders. In 1937-38, the chairman of the Turkmen Supreme Soviet, Nederbai Aitakov, was executed, and with him perished the last of a generation of Turkmen nationalists."[188] Purging governing structures of ethnic nationals allowed the Soviet authorities to limit the potential for native resistance, a continuing fear in part because of the Basmachi revolts that the Turkmen participated in through the early decades of the Soviet Union.

Following de-Stalinization, the political climate liberalized to a certain extent, however, Turkmenistan did not experience rapid political development—as elsewhere, Turkmen began slowly to call for a reinstitution of ethnic Turkmen to governing positions. These native Turkmen who were in a position to fill these

[186] Kareem Al-Bassam "The Evolution of Authoritarianism in Turkmenistan," *Demokratizatsiya* Volume 5, No. 3 (Summer 1997), 390
[187] Aman Berdi Murat, "Turkmenistan and the Turkmens" in *Attitudes of Major Soviet Nationalities*, Volume 4: Central Asia (Cambridge: Center for International Studies, 1973)
[188] Annette Bohr, "Turkmenistan and the Turkmen," in Graham Smith, ed. *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States*. (London and New York: Longman, 1996), 350

political slots had gained prominence and some personal wealth through the establishment of deep patronage networks—often based on previously existing tribal connections but sometimes spanning ethnic groups. Al-Bassam writes, "Progress under Khrushchev and Brezhnev was slow,"[189] and the event with the greatest level of impact in Turkmenistan was the Uzbek cotton scandal, which instigated in Uzbekistan as well as in neighboring republics such as Turkmenistan a major purge to rid the party of corrupt officials and undermine local patronage systems created by cotton monoculture. Patronage networks were widely used as a mechanism for consolidating power and wealth in Soviet Turkmenistan. As Bohr writes, "While making outward displays of fealty and appearing to comply with the norms set down by officials in Moscow, however, many Turkmen political leaders were in fact managing clan-oriented fiefdoms involving massive amounts of embezzlement and graft."[190]

Following World War II, political power in the non-Russian republics slowly began to shift back to native elites—although these elites were more Russified than their predecessors. Murat and Simmonds write of the famous "Babayev Affair" in the late 1950s, when leading Communist Party members in Turkmenistan argued that leading posts in Turkmenistan should be held by Turkmen and that other nationalities should only hold these posts when qualified Turkmen candidates could not be found—this led to a "purge and reshuffling at the time of the entire Party and government apparatus in the republic."[191]

Beginning in the mid-1960s, there was a series of articles in the local press in Turkmenistan, authored by native Turkmen—likely with the backing of the

[189] Al-Bassam, 390
[190] Bohr, "Turkmenistan and the Turkmen", 353
[191] Aman Berdi Murat and George W. Simmonds, "Nationalism in Turkmenistan Since 1964," in George W. Simmonds, ed. *Nationalism in the USSR and Eastern Europe in the Era of Brezhnev and Kosygin* (Detroit: University of Detroit Press), 1975, 320

republican elite in that republic—which "called for an end to Turkmenistan's serving primarily as the Union's supplier of cotton and other raw materials and for greater local economic diversification, the development of a policy of economic self-sufficiency—in short, for altering the thrust of the republic's economic growth from serving primarily the needs of the central Soviet government to responsiveness to local needs."[192] Murat and Simmonds reported in 1975 that this sentiment continued to be expressed in local press organs.[193] Rakowstra-Harmstone wrote in 1975, "the ethnic elites have ascended in the republics' power structure, giving the Moslems the national leadership they have not had since Stalin's purges. Although still relatively small, the elites are growing rapidly, the result of the baby boom and of a mass-based local language educational system."[194]

The formation of Turkmen elite under the Soviet Union, similar to elite formation in colonial Africa, involved cooptation which interacted with and was aimed at spontaneous and self-interested actors within indigenous society.[195] As Beissinger writes, "The recruitment of collaborators from indigenous society usually leads to considerable change in the indigenous social structure."[196] As in Africa, Soviet policies of cooptation involved significant restratification within non-Russian society. "Cooptation of non-Russians produced a type of 'layering' phenomenon, in which intragroup differences were used to buffer or support a broader system of intergroup stratification. This pattern of stratification, as opposed to the pillarization and segmentation common to consociational politics or the strict horizontal cleavages

[192] Murat and Simmonds, 317
[193] *ibid*.
[194] Teresa Rakowstra-Harmstone, "Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia Since 1964," in George W. Simmonds, ed. *Nationalism in USSR and Eastern Europe in the Era of Brezhnev and Kosygin* (Detroit: University of Detroit Press, 1975), 273
[195] Mark R. Beissinger, "Elites and Ethnic Identities in Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics," in Alexander J. Motyl, ed. *The Post-Soviet Nations: Perspectives on the Demise of the USSR* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 152
[196] Beissinger, "Elites and Ethnic Identities," 152

characteristic of ethnically closed social orders, was long characteristic of Soviet elite recruitment in the non-Russian territories. Its consequences pervaded local political processes in the republics."[197]

Despite some political mobilization by local ethnic Turkmen elite, by the 1980s Turkmenistan was still considered the most conservative and even backward area of the Soviet Union.[198] At the end of Gorbachev's rule, Turkmenistan was highly dependent, economically and politically, on the center. The Turkmen Communist Party leaders was a highly Russified group of elites who had weak connections to the majority of the mostly rural population.

Because of their republic's socioeconomic situation, the Turkmen communist party enjoyed several advantages over other former Soviet states. First, as Al-Bassam points out, "the effects of perestroika did not penetrate deep into Turkmen society."[199] Therefore, Communist Party elites were better able to protect themselves from the fallout associated with Gorbachev's reforms. These elites were self-styled patrons of their national cultures, and benefactors of the new architecture and transformation from Russian to their own national languages, a role played by opposition leaders in other republics. A cultural deference to authority among the rural population that was naturally conservative provided another advantage for Turkmenistan's elite at the time of independence. The intelligentsia in Turkmenistan was small and had trouble articulating the interests of society and mobilizing people, therefore this group was not an instigator of reform. The state controlled the mass media and was able to play upon perceived threats, from ethnic and tribal strife and violence between citizens and the state, that they could demonstrate occurring in other former Soviet republics.

[197] *ibid*.
[198] Al-Bassam, 390
[199] *ibid*., 391

Beissinger adds, "the low level of mass mobilization in Central Asia can partly be explained by the lack of organization of counter-elites in the region, due in part to the absence of dissident tradition."[200] As a result of these factors, Niyazov's regime, like other Central Asian regimes after the fall of the Soviet Union, became a "nationalizing" regime.[201]

Transitions From Colonial Rule

As Lieven has highlighted, in comparing colonized regions it is necessary not just to look at the type of colonial rule but also at the decline of the empire and the way in which it declined. Struggle, or the absence of struggle, in a transitional situation can condition the early years of an independent state. He writes, "What forms de-colonization takes can have a big impact on the newly independent country and its political system. Independence can result in anarchy and in revolutionary upheavals in a society and its values, or at the other extreme it can appear to make very little difference to everyday lives or even the local structure of power. The latter is likeliest if power is ceded graciously by former imperial masters to local elites created and protected by the imperial regime itself."[202]

Gregory Gleason and Susan Buck, considering the Central Asian states, find striking parallels with sub-Saharan Africa, and suggest adopting African decolonization as a model for studying Central Asian post-Soviet political developments. They write,

> If this decolonization process is adopted as the model for the new states of Central Asia, it is clear that some of the patterns are similar, some different. As in many decolonized areas, the national boundaries of the Central Asian states are artificial

[200] Beissinger, "Elites and Ethnic Identities," 152
[201] Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr, Edward Allworth, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)
[202] Lieven, 25

> structures, adopted primarily for the convenience of the metropole, but no pre-existing national identities were associated with these states. As in many decolonizing areas, there were nationalist movements stirring, but political opposition was not the key to change, and no powerful, charismatic, heroic leaders were swept into power with a moral mandate. Like most decolonizing areas, there was a stratum of metropolitan settlers in privileged positions, but those privileges were not associated with private property and did not offer any advantages after independence. Like most cases of decolonization, the metropole had grown reliant, if not dependent, on a flow of raw materials from the colonies, but Moscow had also extended its basic physical infrastructure of communication, energy, transportation, and scientific research to these areas in such a way that both the centre and the periphery were vulnerable to dislocations.[203]

Central Asia and Africa's transitional periods differed considerably. Beissinger and Young write, "To be sure, both regions were buffeted by similar international pressures of change: global waves of democratization; international norms of self-determination; and pressures for economic restructuring. Yet the paths taken toward independence and to state crises were diverse."[204] In Central Asia, there was no struggle; in fact, in most cases independence had to be forced onto these states, the leaders of which were reluctant to leave the Soviet Union. Lieven suggests that securing independence in this manner may have deprived the regimes of some level of legitimacy, but also that "with the exception of Tajikistan, their societies have avoided the trauma and upheaval of revolution and war. Their rulers are political bureaucrats, not generals, revolutionaries or demagogues."[205]

Africa's independence came mostly as the result of peaceful transfers of power in the 1950s and 1960s. The Second World War, scholars contend, acted as a catalyst and speeding along economic and social changes that arose out of the nature

[203] Gleason and Buck, 523
[204] Beissinger and Young, 37
[205] Lieven, 33

of the colonial systems themselves.[206] Moore writes, "independence comes, across Africa, all at once. Yet though resistance has been continuous throughout the colonial period, as periods and places of intense struggle have alternated with quieter times and times of great repression, in ways the newfound freedom is less won than handed over. External forces, world forces, or forces internal to the colonizing powers seem responsible for the sudden change. There is no moment of full satisfaction…. Not surprisingly, the newly independent African states are often underprepared for self-rule."[207] Lieven writes, "Most of Black Africa did not gain independence or thereby acquire legitimacy by revolutionary war."[208] Devastating wars did occur in Africa, though primarily only in the Portuguese colonies and the Belgian Congo– in these cases, Lieven suggests, violence "occurred in part because independence was granted in a great hurry and with almost no political preparation. The newly independent African states very easily became the targets for regional and other factions which sought to capture them for their own material benefit. When these countries possessed valuable commodities this increased the lure of political power, the scale of corruption, and the total destruction of any sense of citizenship or community."[209]

In both Africa and Central Asia, however, "the newly independent states were not entirely new. Rather, they were fragments of pre-independence state authority, whose bureaucracies, resources, debts, informal relationships, and official privileges were handed over almost intact to new governing elites. Even those governing elites were not entirely new, as most had been schooled under the previous regime; in the

[206] See, for example, I. Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Independence, An Interpretation of Modern African History* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1961) or K. Post, *The New States of West Africa* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1964)
[207] D. Moore, 114
[208] Lieven, 30
[209] *ibid*.

former Soviet Union, many were even the previous regime's rulers."[210] Beissinger and Young write, "The everyday deontology of administrative operation silently assimilated the habits, routines, mentalities, and hidden normative codes of the colonial state [in Africa]."[211] In this way, "Although the era of formal colonial occupation in Africa came mostly to an end in the 1950s and 1960s, the habitus embedded by the colonial state remained and amalgamated dialectically with the state-building and power-reproduction imperatives of the postcolonial successor elite."[212] The post-colonial elite in Africa were, as Post reminds us, "the products of extremely complex patterns of interaction between traditional societies, evolved over many centuries, and the forces set in motion by colonial rule."[213] In the aftermath of colonial rule, African elites "did not inherit a clean slate… they took over particular structures of central and local government, systems of law and education. They assumed responsibility for the direction of economies which had been developed in particular ways to meet particular demands during the colonial period. The first few years after independence were marked by the attempt to gain full control of this inheritance, and more especially to use the structures of government to tackle the problems of economic development."[214]

Rulers of the new states in innumerable ways sought "visible demarcation from the colonial past to establish the authenticity of... rule."[215] Quick reform of the instruments of socialization, from school curricula to pledges, oaths, and symbols, began in the period following independence in order to foster a sense of nationalism. As in postcolonial Africa, "post-Soviet leaders also sought in many cases visible

[210] Beissinger and Young, 38
[211] *ibid.*, 40
[212] *ibid.*, 24
[213] Post, 42
[214] *ibid.*, 62
[215] Beissinger and Young, 39

symbolic and substantive demarcation from the communist past. New national histories and symbols were quickly substituted for the old, and the post-communist projects of transition (from plan to market, from communist autocracy to fledgling democracy, from colonial subject to nation) became central elements of the legitimating discourse of power in most former republics."[216]

In Africa, colonial legacies became embedded in post-colonial states partly by inertial force. To continue past practices is the default option for new state agents and officials. However, Africans were actively involved to some extent in the continuation, or decision to adopt colonial boundaries and practices. Beissinger and Young comment, "The first imperative of the ruler is the reproduction of power, and the search for a monopoly hold on the instruments of rule soon seemed indispensable for these purposes. In the 1960s and 1970s, this seemed to require the positioning of the dominant party as the sole occupant of political space and the subordination of the infrastructures of representation created by the terminal colonial state. The colonial state legacy of incontestable authority, clothed in the radical language of anticolonial nationalism, had natural attractions."[217]

This combination– the internal logic of the colonial state, combined with the need to create legitimacy in the period following independence, in the African case fostered the emergence of what Young has called the integral state. The integral state had "enlarged ambitions of transforming society according to its blueprint," and it attempted to act "directly on civil society."[218] In Young's vision, an integral state exhibits perfected hegemony, that is, the unrestricted control of the state over civil society. The achievement of this type of state "requires not only the autonomy from

[216] *ibid.*, 44
[217] *ibid.*, 41
[218] Young, *The African Colonial State*, 288

civil society achieved through comprehensive instruments of political control but also a suzereignty, if not monopoly, extending over social and economic vectors of accumulation."[219]

Young develops further his conception of an integral state, which to my mind bears resemblance to the systems of personal rule and regime developed in my first chapter. He writes, "Building on the exclusionary principle of the colonial state, the integral state sharpens the line between state and society by proposing a comprehensive apparatus of domination. The subject is a passive citizen, whose civic obligations are enacted through public rituals of allegiance: support marches, applause for leaders, unanimous plebiscite votes for the ruler. Civil society is organized into party-structured ancillary organizations, which are mechanisms of surveillance and control rather than participation and voice."[220] Africa has seen various examples of states attempting to achieve this type of domination in the period following independence. There arose in many countries a "moment of illusion, when the state appeared on the verge of achieving a comprehensive and perfected hegemony over society."[221]

Of course, historical experience cannot be the only factor in the rise of personalist government, but it may be an instructive one. Although personalist rule has been prevalent in Central Asia since the fall of the Soviet Union, it certainly has not been everywhere as deeply embedded, or as extreme, as in the case of Turkmenistan. Other factors—personality-based, structural and macrostructural—are certainly at work in the formation and embedding of extreme personalist rule in post-colonial contexts.

[219] *ibid*.
[220] *ibid*.
[221] Beissinger and Young, 42

The following chapters will explore more specifically the nature of rule under sultanistic regimes—particularly, aspects of legitimation under the regime of Niyazov in post-Soviet Turkmenistan. Where appropriate, examples from the African historical experience will help to contextualize consideration of Turkmenistan's current leadership. While sultanism's origins are complex and multi-faceted, the attempt of sultans to construct extravagant pseudo-ideologies as window-dressing for their rule seems to be a common aspect of the regime type.

CHAPTER FOUR

CREATING DOMAIN CONSENSUS IN THE NEW STATES

New states emerging from periods of colonial rule "all confront or have confronted the necessity of legitimating themselves before their people."[1] Political regimes that lack strong popular support struggle to create legitimacy in various ways– through fear and intimidation, corruption and bribery, and political patronage, in addition to ideological indoctrination. Ricoeur, reflecting on Weber, writes, "Every system of [political] leadership wants its rule to be granted because its authority is legitimate. It is ideology's role to legitimate this authority."[2] While Niyazov's regime does work through coercive channels, this chapter concerns his regime's methods of obtaining *normative* compliance from its subjects. As Schatzberg writes, "Dominance is most easily achieved and most effectively implemented when people accept and internalize the state's ideological myths."[3] It is, as Callaghy writes, "a battle of belief, and one that relies heavily on Machiavelli's concern with illusion creation and manipulation."[4] In Turkmenistan, this consists primarily in the formulation and propagation of an artificial, controlled doctrine that attempts to establish the right of the regime to rule.

African cases of patrimonial rule have generated a literature concerning types of legitimating doctrine and methods of propagation employed by regimes emerging from colonial situations. This literature, along with isolated works on Middle Eastern and other regimes, provides a good framework for consideration of the Turkmen case. As colonial rule fell in Africa, the new states emerged with serious problems of forging new identities at the social and at the individual levels. Political elites were

[1] E. Shils, "On the Comparative Study of the New States," in C. Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 2
[2] Ricoeur, cited in K. N'Gambwa, "Regime Legitimation in Education in Zaire" (New York: Columbia University, 1997, PhD dissertation), p. 8
[3] Michael Schatzberg, *The Dialectics of Oppression in Zaire*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001), p. 25
[4] Thomas Callaghy, *The State-Society Struggle: Zaire in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), p. 85

"faced with the problem of changing their countries from colonial, economically and socially underdeveloped, culturally backwards and ethnically and linguistically divided entities into politically independent, modern nation states. They therefore had little option but to try and create a powerful political religion which would unite tribal factions on the basis of a new loyalty and legitimate the new central authority."[5]

Patrimonial regimes generally adopt legitimating packages that permit the strong personal ruler, or sometimes the ruling group, wide discretion in decision making because "limiting ideological commitments are few and unspecific, and it facilitates major and repeated changes in policy direction and the co-option of opponents."[6] Often, under sultanistic regimes, the pseudo-ideology will be so closely intertwined with the personal ruler that it will bear his name—such as "Jean-Claudism" in Haiti in 1978, Ferdinand Marcos' book *An Ideology for Filipinos*, and *Les Grandes Textes due Mobutisme* in Zaire in the 1970s.[7] Pseudo-ideologies that are adopted are "usually an eclectic and often haphazard blend of ambiguous, fluctuating, and often derivative legitimating formulas that attempt to give the impression of being an ideology. In fact, however, they lack coherence, complexity, and clear articulation of specific assertions and explicit commitments."[8] In Africa, they contained jumbled-together elements of socialist beliefs, ritual symbols and organizational practice and of indigenous traditional communal and aesthetic culture.

Whatever the mixture, the conglomerate is held together by a leadership cult, elevating the "leader of the liberation period into a figure who is at one and the same time a man of the people and a superhuman prophet and saint. He is said to know the

[5] Christel Lane, *The Rites of Rulers: Ritual in Industrial Society-the Soviet Case* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 261
[6] Callaghy, 9
[7] Chehabi and Linz, "A Theory of Sultanism 1: A Type of Nondemocratic Rule," *Sultanistic Regimes* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), p. 14
[8] Callaghy, 9

needs of the people, show them the new way and guide them towards an idyllic future. Identification with this leader provides both social and personal meaning, facilitates the restructuring of basic attitudes and motivation and justifies the privations and upheaval endured for the sake of a bright future."[9] These cults of personality often form the fabric of the national ideology, or in some cases even supplant the ideology and become the only real official doctrine. Intertwined with the ideas of political religion and familial metaphors (portraying the ruler in one case as a saint, in the next as a father), cults of leadership are strong in most sultanistic regimes. Denison writes, "In weak, young states with limited cultural cohesion and an unformed national narrative, a personality cult grants a leader the opportunity to construct or remake national history and identity and, moreover, to reach into that construction in order to furnish his own authority in the present, and fashion his own perceived place in its destiny. A cult… generates a national space within and beyond the confines of the state in which the ruler becomes indivisible with the state's identity, history, and future."[10]

The aim of these pseudo-ideologies is not to promote a moral concept or political doctrine per se—one of the hallmarks of a sultanistic regime is that these ideologies maintain some combination of "political quiescence, social submissiveness, passive resignation, or popular acceptance of the prevailing political situation," and thereby preserve access to the state's rewards.[11] Although the content of patrimonial legitimating doctrines varies by case, there are certain themes found commonly across cases. This section discusses new nationalisms, political religion, and patriarchal patrimonialism, all salient in African cases as well as in Turkmenistan.

[9] Lane, 261
[10] Michael Denison, "Are They Laughing At Us?" Strategies of Compliance and Resistance to the Leadership Cult in Contemporary Turkmenistan, Leeds University, 2003, p. 10-11
[11] Schatzberg, *Zaire*, 27

Common Elements of Pseudo-Ideologies

Nationalism

A common element of nearly all of these legitimating doctrines is an intense strain of nationalism and calls for national unity from above. In states emerging from a period of colonization, particularly, elites are "almost always intensely nationalistic."[12] Nationalism is promoted in part to reduce the likelihood of ethnic separatism, unrest, or secession. Schatzberg writes, "Given the artificial and culturally plural nature of most African countries, it is not surprising African leaders almost universally embrace ideologies of nationalism and nation-building. Briefly put, those who control the state incessantly preach the main task of all citizens is to build the nation."[13] As a corollary, leaders often regard any sub-national identities as threats to nation building. This nationalism, then, can take the form of a positive doctrine of unity or the discriminatory prohibition of various ethnic associations and violations of minority rights.

African regimes took different approaches to the construction of concepts of post-colonial nationalism. Young and Turner write, "State doctrine (in post-colonial Africa) must constitute a civil society, and construct an ideological organic relationship between civil society and the state. The primary means for accomplishing this goal is to transform the idea of nationalism from an anti-colonial rejection of alien rule into a positive assertion that the human collectivity enclosed within the territorial boundaries of the state is a historically ordained community, and not a mere accidental juxtaposition of individuals or microgroupings of residence and descent."[14]

[12] Shils, 2
[13] Schatzberg, *Zaire*, 27
[14] Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p. 28

In Africa, regimes adopted different types of nationalist symbols—while some rulers fully embraced traditional symbols and relics of pre-colonial periods, others adopted Western style clothes and symbols as elements of their nationalist doctrine, to show what was perceived as a modernized and advanced civilization.

Political Religion

Under sultanistic regimes, although ideologies are conceived after the leader's rise to power, the doctrines often seem to grow in importance as time passes. "Modern political leaders come to recognize quickly, however, that no ordinary ideology can prevail for long in the face of obvious discrepancies between theory and practice. A more powerful symbolic force, less rational, although it may include rational ends, seems necessary to them."[15] In such state-created doctrine, as Lane writes, "There is a notable tendency... [for a state] to create its own holy scripture, traditions, ritual attributes, saints and its holy places of pilgrimage.... holy in the sense that... they are given a timeless importance and are considered as part of the unalterable order of things."[16] Here, this tendency will be referred to as political religion. This pseudo-religious dimension is sometimes explicit, but more often is implicit, attaching the timelessness and sacred respect of religious figures to contemporary political leadership in a manner that harkens back to absolutist claims of divine right to rule.

Under doctrines of legitimacy that approach political religions, the state and the regime take on sacred characteristics. These characteristics become essential to maintaining community solidarity—for example, there might be persistent attacks on particular enemies, whether internal opposition or general threats such as capitalism

[15] D. E. Apter, "Political Religion in the New Nations," in C. Geertz, ed., *Old Societies and New States: The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa* (London: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), p. 61
[16] Lane, 36

or neo-colonialism. Independence is seen as a natural rebirth, and the "agent of rebirth is normally any individual… who, as the leader of the political movement, is midwife to the birth of the nation. Sometimes this is expressed in songs and chants and other times in political prayers."[17] A major characteristic is the cult of leadership surrounding an individual with characteristics of revealed truth. Apter writes, "There are similarities between political religions and church religions. There are saints and villains. There are prophets and missionaries. To each individual the possibility of a political calling replaces the possibility of a religious calling. There is mysticism and authority."[18]

Bringing sacred elements to political regimes enhances the regime's security. Apter writes,

> Endowing their roles with sacred elements makes their authority stronger and the regime more secure. Moreover, since everything is known about the leaders, their past, their family, their daily routine, they can hardly be remote and distant. Quite the contrary, they characteristically remain friendly and fraternal. If such familiarity is not, however, to result in disrespect for authority, the sacred role needs to utilize familiarity and turn it about. The public comes to be grateful for the spreading of the sacred largesse, and are purified by the divine. They see that the 'Man of the People' remains with the people, but they never confuse him with ordinary men. Authority then becomes stabilized in the role of the Leader and his manipulation of power, and friendliness is a token of majesty.[19]

Patriarchal Patrimonialism

Perhaps even more salient in the cases considered here is the notion of father and family applied to leader and nation as part of the legitimation campaigns in new patrimonial post-colonial states. As Callaghy writes, the "Father of the People" is the

[17] D. Apter, 83
[18] *ibid.*, 87
[19] *ibid.*, 81

ideal for leadership under patrimonial governance.[20] "Political theorists and ideologues in various historical epochs and places have invoked metaphors of the family to define the terms of political membership. Political narratives often displace the emotionally charged, immediately meaningful relationship of family life onto the more impersonal, remote, and abstract relations between rulers and ruled or among citizens."[21] This ideological motif is one that can help legitimize, or at least make slightly more palatable, some of the nastier aspects of political life under sultanistic regimes. Political leaders can "portray stern measures taken against segments of the population as paternal discipline rather than political repression."[22] Leaders often justify political directives and policies on the grounds they will be good for the larger national family.

The invocation of familial metaphor may or may not be an attempt to encourage feelings of love and kinship for a ruler, and populations may never in reality feel this kind of connection. There is no evidence in most cases that this "rhetoric signals the externalization of unconscious fantasies. Instead, family members operate in the official narrative to represent the regime's idealized relations of domination and membership and to specify the form of public obedience" in a given country.[23] The aim of the familial metaphor in political rhetoric is that citizens should behave as if they were children and the president was their father. They should "fear, revere, and honour him with their deference. They should also act as if they loved him and were willing to sacrifice for him. And if called upon publicly, they should not embarrass him or disgrace the community he heads, but rather behave as if they were extensions of him, capable of emulating his qualities and of making him

[20] Callaghy, 71
[21] Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), p. 49
[22] Schatzberg, *Zaire*, 26
[23] Wedeen, 51

proud."[24]

Familial metaphors work with nation-building ideologies particularly in societies where traditional kinship groupings remain an important organizing unit—true both of sub-Saharan Africa and Turkmenistan. "The images of father and family are so pervasive because they strike a resonant and deeply embedded cultural chord. In other words, they form part of a culturally valid and largely implicit comprehension of the limits of political legitimacy based on a complex and largely unarticulated moral matrix of legitimate governance derived from an idealized vision of patterns of authority and behaviour within the family."[25] Familial imagery is attractive because it speaks to psychological needs for security and a desire for intimacy between rulers and ruled. This type of imagery can also mask exploitatively unequal flows of resources with "authoritarian overtones, aspects mentioned earlier in the context of paternal 'generosity' and the resultant 'debt'."[26]

Enforcing Compliance, Not Belief

Approaches to the subject of ritual and ideology that treat discourse and rhetoric as independent variables producing different political outcomes are not perfectly suited to analysis of pseudo-ideology under sultanism. Importantly, the legitimating doctrines of sultanistic regimes do not generally mobilize citizens in the same way that totalitarian ideologies, for example, do. Under sultanism, successful rhetoric and symbols may not produce real charisma for the regime, or attract popular loyalty—however, they can still be effective ways of attaining compliance, in two ways. First, official rhetoric and imagery can operate as forms of power in their own rights, by enforcing obedience and sustaining the conditions under which regimes

[24] *ibid.*, 65
[25] Schatzberg, *Zaire*, 89
[26] *ibid.*, 90

rule. Secondly, real loyalty and belief need not exist for a legitimating doctrine to serve a purpose—the appearance of belief alone is a very useful tool for a sultanistic regime. Backed by fear and intimidation, even a poorly executed ideology may have lasting effects on a population. In the Syrian case, Wedeen studied the cult of leadership surrounding Asad and found that even when a political regime fails to convince the population of its outlandish claims, it can succeed in creating emotional ties between leader and followers. This approximates the situation in Turkmenistan closely—Wedeen writes, "If only by dint of repetition, everyone is fluent in the symbolic vocabulary of the Syrian state, which has become a hallmark of Asad's regime."[27]

Niyazov's cult and the ideology of *Ruhnama* is a strategy of domination that is largely based on compliance, but there is also an element of real belief, particularly in the younger generation, that might truly help to buttress Niyazov's rule—a factor enhanced by the country's increasing isolation. Fear of reprimand or harsh punishment is the most significant factor in forcing compliance, while education is the most prominent way of inculcating the new system of belief in youth. Turkmenbashy's regime, like others employing similar tactics, is "powerful because [it] can compel people to say the ridiculous and to avow the absurd."[28] The similarities between post-Soviet Turkmenistan and post-colonial African countries with regard to ideology reflect their similarities in historical moment—these states face the dilemma of simultaneously building an effective state and fostering a sense of nationhood—building an effective state "requires the regime to enforce its political dominance, *while* generating support from a broad constituency and cultivating a

[27] Wedeen, 1
[28] *ibid.*, 12

sense of national membership."[29]

Exemplar Pseudo-Ideologies: *Mobutuisme* and Authenticity in Zaire

An instructive example of sultanistic pseudo-ideology in Africa is found in the case of Mobutu's Zaire. Mobutu's formal, explicitly propagated ideologies were Zairian nationalism, Authenticity, and *Mobutuisme*.[30] One of the major elements of Mobutu's state-building strategy was the establishment of what Callaghy calls a domain consensus, in his case, a "political religion built around the presidential monarch– a set of legitimizing principles and new definitions of authority and identity used in an attempt to diffuse ethnic identity and traditional authority as foci of political action."[31] Mobutu's legitimating doctrine, along with those of many of his contemporaries and also Niyazov's in Turkmenistan, was less a consistent and formal ideology than a blend of eclectic elements and myths. Mobutu's ideology combined several ambiguous legitimating doctrines, including notions from liberal democracy, revolutionary populism, and even socialism. Above all, however, it was organic-statist in orientation and drew on traditional African notions of "community, equity, authority, and power, particularly pre-colonial concepts of kingship, chiefship, and the 'big man.'"[32] This eclecticism, which is also seen in other patrimonial African states and in Turkmenistan, results partly from the competing legacies of pre-colonial and colonial periods.

Zaire's major legitimating doctrines, known as Authenticity and *Mobutuisme*, were constructed and propagated from above, first in a series of decrees and then continuously through official symbols, ritual, rhetoric and educational programs. The

[29] *ibid.*, 14
[30] Schatzberg, *Zaire*, 73
[31] Callaghy, 166
[32] *ibid.*, 6

official doctrines were not constructed until well after Mobutu's rise to power. In the early 1960s, Mobutu's regime began by emphasizing themes such as order, control, discipline and work—representing the need for a move away from the disorder of the first five years of independence.[33] Between 1967 and 1970 there was a change in the tone of the political rhetoric, and themes emerged such as the need for a love of work, economic independence, agricultural recovery—"Let's roll up our sleeves", "authentic nationalism" and a struggle against tribalism, vigilance, support for Mobutu and the MPR, and return to the land.

Mobutu's Zaire is an excellent example of a regime manufacturing compliance through a legitimating doctrine that became something of a political religion. Callaghy writes, "The core of Zairian absolutist domain consensus doctrines is a political religion that specified and glorifies the role of the 'new prince', Mobutu Sese Seko, who saved Zaire from disintegration and chaos. It is a monarchical religion. Underneath florid twentieth-century revolutionary language, the key absolutist concepts of divine right, ruler sovereignty, and raison d'etat are clearly evident."[34] Religious symbolism is employed to justify the exercise of unlimited personal discretion by the 'monarch' in order to achieve the higher purposes of the state, which are divinely inspired. "Using both sacred and secular ideas, the Zairian political religion merges traditional African notions of kingly or chiefly power and of the state with concepts from Christianity and Roman law, both imposed by the colonial state, to depict Mobutu as an instrument chosen by God and the ancestors to bring peace, unity, dignity, and prosperity to Zaire."[35] He was known as "Messiah," "Liberator," "Helmsman," and "Guide." Mobutu had a hymn written for himself,

[33] *ibid*., 322
[34] Callaghy, 319
[35] *ibid*.

Djalelo, known as "Hymn to the President." Teachers at religious schools in Zaire were required to present the administration in a religious light, a requirement that became taxing and alienating in the later years of the regime. One of N'Gambwa's respondents said, "Sometimes it was like asking a Catholic to teach that Mohammed was the only true Savior and Islam the only true religion. We were required to present Mobutu as our Prophet and the MPR our religion."[36]

Familial metaphor, along with allusions to chieftainship and traditional social groupings, became a backbone of Mobutu's rhetoric. Mobutu was known both as the "chief" of the Zairian village and as *le pere de la nation* (father of the nation). N'Gambwa writes, Naipaul writes of Mobutu, "He is citizen, chief, king, revolutionary; he is an African freedom fighter, he is supported by the spirits of the ancestors…. He has occupied every ideological position and the basis of his kingship cannot be questioned. He rules; he is grand; and… he is at once loved and feared."[37] This imagery helped produce public tolerance for policies that harmed citizens. Any sacrifices resulting from these policies were considered necessary for the good of the national family and a vital part of nation building.

Turkmenistan: Niyazov's *Ruhnama*

In Turkmenistan, a distinct pseudo-ideology has emerged that centres on the presidential personality cult and Niyazov's guiding books *Ruhnama* and, recently, *Ruhnama II*, which extol a nationalist interpretation of the history of Turkmenistan and outline a moral code for its citizens. The extent to which *Ruhnama* is glorified and the extreme elevation of the president make Turkmenistan another case in which state-propagated political religion is taking hold, complete with holy symbols, heroes,

[36] N'Gambwa, 189
[37] Naipaul, 1981, in N'Gambwa, 73

temples, texts, ritual and holidays. Additionally, the concept of patriarchal patrimonialism rings true in Central Asia as in sub-Saharan Africa—like Mobutu and other African sultans, Niyazov is known as the Father of the Nation (the translation of Turkmenbashy) and presents himself as both a benign father figure and an omnipresent disciplinary symbol.

The central tenet and name of Niyazov's legitimating doctrine is *Ruhnama*—a concept which did not predate his regime and in fact was not introduced officially until more than a decade after independence. Niyazov first announced the program of *Ruhnama* in mid-1999, although the official manuscript of the book was not published for another two years. In June 1999, Niyazov held a meeting with Turkmenistan's scientific and cultural leaders and media directors to discuss the problem of Turkmenistan's "spiritual revival". He proposed creation of a "desktop book of every Turkmenistani… to perform the role of a kind of moral guide through life for each family and for the entire people and the state as a whole."[38] His vision of the *Ruhnama* concept at that time was a program encompassing the "entire wealth of spiritual experience of the people (reflected) in their contemporary history."[39]

The first themes of Niyazov's ideological legitimation efforts centred around the idea of "national revival". The choice of term, instead of the more common "Nation-building" was important in itself—Niyazov wanted to stress a return to the pre-Soviet customs and ways of the Turkmen nation, which itself is a huge construction—prior to the Soviet Central Asian delimitation in 1924, no Turkmen nation existed as such and certainly not one that was united or settled. National revival constituted part of Niyazov's national program, the "Strategy of economic,

[38] V. Mikhaylov and Georgiy Smolnikov, "Niyazov has set forth his credo: a Program of the People's Moral Revival is Being Developed," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (Moscow, 1999) 5
[39] *ibid*.

political, and cultural development of Turkmenistan until 2020", which focused on unity, solidarity and restoration of historical Turkmen values and culture, and the creation of higher living standards in Turkmenistan.[40] Unity is seen as a counter to tribalism-- tribalism has been considered one of the biggest threats to the stability of contemporary Turkmenistan, because tribal affiliations are still salient and animosities often run deep between tribes. Kuru writes, "Turkmenbashy defines the governmental policy on the unity of tribes as 'national revival' by returning to the real history and spiritual source, rather than 'nation building'. According to him, what is happening in Turkmenistan is only the rediscovery of the forgotten national identity: 'By forming an independent and totally neutral Turkmen state uniting a number of tribes into a whole, we did not create a new nation; what we did was to return its national pivot, which used to be strong and powerful by has been shattered by blows of the historical fate.'"[41]

Before the introduction of the *Ruhnama*, Turkmen national revival focused on several pillars: the development of Turkmen as the vernacular language of state, the use of the media to promote the regimes' symbols and narratives, the revision of national histories, and educational propaganda. Culture and art have also been subject to national revival. In 1999, Niyazov discouraged the import of foreign films, saying "Disgraceful things in these films are a bad example for our young people and they do not suit the Turkmen spirit."[42] In 2001, television broadcasts of a presidential speech outlined Niyazov's new policies for culture, media, and education. He did away with the current Turkmen television stations and created three new television channels and radio channels, where programs of "national flavour" would dominate. Ballet, opera,

[40] C. Durdiyeva, "Turkmenistan Celebrates a Triple Holiday," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, Johns Hopkins University, 2004, 2
[41] Ahmed T. Kuru, "Between the State and Cultural Zones: Nation Building in Turkmenistan," *Central Asian Survey* 21(1): 71-90 (2002), p. 73
[42] Report on Ashgabat Channel One (in Turkmen), television programme evening 12 April 1999

and most recently, lip synching have been outlawed and people are encouraged to appreciate Turkmen art. Niyazov said "During the 70 years of the Soviet Union we have learnt a lot about cultures, we know great Western classics, we are familiar also with Shakespeare, French writers, many composers, but we do not know the origin of Turkmens, we do not know our writers…. We have forgotten somewhere our national and Turkmen flavour…. I always say in my speeches that we need the theatre, but if there is no ballet in the blood of the Turkmens, why do you want to give it to them?... A nation cannot present itself as cultured people by introducing another art. We must study our national culture, we must create our national theatre."[43]

Perhaps the most widely known of Niyazov's recent decrees is the national re-naming of the Turkmen calendar and the creation of stages of life. Turkmen citizens reaching the age of 62, the age at which the Prophet Mohammed died, are issued payments and given an extra paid holiday. The decree is printed here in full: "In order to revive the national values and traditions of their forefathers in the Golden Age, and to perpetuate the famous names of Oghuzhan, the forefather of the nation, of Gorkut Ata, the symbol of a wise Turkmen elder in the world, of Alp Arslan, who has been incomparable in his courage, of Soltan Sanjar, who ruled the Turkmen state for 52 years, of Magtumguly Pyragy, a singer of the human soul, and to praise our great independence and neutrality, to ascribe the names of the days of the week according to the Turkmen national spirit, and to put into use the new national calendar, days of the week and a 12 year cycle of the human life span… I resolve:

1. To introduce in Turkmenistan… the national calendar in the following form. The national names for the months of the year are to be: the first month—Turkmenbashy; the second month—Baydak (flag, referring to the Turkmen

[43] Report on Ashgabat Channel One (in Russian), television programme 03 April 2001

flag holiday celebrated on 19 February); the third month—Nowruz (name of the solar New Year, marked on 21 March); the fourth month—Gurbansoltan (the name of Niyazov's late mother); the fifth month—Magtumguly (medieval Turkmen poet and philosopher); the sixth month—Oghuzhan (considered as the founder of the Turkmen nation); the seventh month—Gorkut (symbolizing a wise Turkmen elder); the eighth month—Alp Arslan (ancient Turkmen warlord); the ninth month—Ruhnama; the tenth month—Garassyzlyk (independence, referring to Turkmen Independence Day, marked on 27 October); the eleventh month—Soltan Sanjar (name of a medieval Turkmen ruler); the twelfth month—Bitaraplyk (neutrality—referring to Turkmen Neutrality Day, marked on 12 December).

2. The national names for the days of week are to be approved as follows: Bas Gun (Main Day, for Monday); Yas Gun (Young Day); Hos Gun (Good Day); Sogap Gun (Blessed Day); Anna (Friday); Ruh Gun (Spiritual Day); and Dync Gun (Rest Day).
3. The national life span of our Turkmen people is to be approved in the following form: up to 13 years—the age of childhood; from 13 to 25 years—the age of adolescence; from 25 to 37—the age of youthfulness; from 37 to 49—the age of maturity; from 49 to 61—the prophetic age; from 61 to 73—the age of inspiration; from 73 to 85—the age of wisdom; from 85-97 old age; from 97 to 109—the age of Oghuzhan."[44]

Publication of the first volume of *Ruhnama* (Book of the Soul) in September 2001 solidified the direction of Niyazov's legitimating doctrine. According to a Peace Corps volunteer based near Dashoguz, "national official ideology can be summed up

[44] *Neytralnyy Turkmenistan* page 1, 13 August 2002

by the *Ruhnama*. All moral guidelines are delivered through this pervasive book."[45] *Ruhnama* is a comprehensive set of guidelines on how one should live, an autobiography of Niyazov, and a dubious narrative on the history and post-independence politics of Turkmenistan. *Ruhnama*, in effect, has become the primary instrument of cultural policy in Turkmenistan and is propagated in every sector of life. It is taught in schools and read in mandatory weekend sessions in industrial workplaces. At the medical institute in Ashgabat, the teaching of physics has been replaced by courses on *Ruhnama*.[46] According to the U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan, up to 11 hours per week of elementary school curricula is devoted to *Ruhnama*, and a 16-hour *Ruhnama* course is a prerequisite to attaining a driving license.[47] One Peace Corps volunteer claims: "Quotes from this text adorn the hallway walls (in schools) and can be found in all classrooms. Each week, students will have several hours of formal *Ruhnama* training, while other classes include biology, mathematics, English, Turkmen, art, Russian, and singing. Though *Ruhnama* is only one subject, this would be hard to tell from sitting in on other subjects' classes. Biology classes are interrupted mid-class to recite passages from the book and the regional English competition this past year contained no grammatical questions. Rather, the winning student was the one who recited the *Ruhnama* in English with the highest accuracy. Basically, all lesson planning contains the book in some form or fashion."[48]

Since its initial publication in September 2001, the book has been published in many languages, a fact that the regime uses to convey the impression that the tome is respected and even revered in other countries, which is largely a falsity—to the extent

[45] Interview with Peace Corps Volunteer "C", 2005
[46] Interview with Peace Corps Volunteer "N", 2005
[47] Interview with Peace Corps Volunteer "N", 2005
[48] Interview with Peace Corps Volunteer "C", 2005

that knowledge of the book has spread, it is internationally mocked. *Ruhnama* was published in an English edition in March 2002—the Ashgabat Turkmen State News Service gave the following report: "the publishers… justly decided that the work of genius by the Turkmen leader would meet with a wide welcome by the multimillion strong English-speaking audience. Such confidence is based on the unprecedented interest shown in many countries of the world in the Turkmen leader's optimistic philosophical system."[49] The report provides quotations from "representatives of the world intellectual elite," from political figures, historians and philosophers—"The *Ruhnama* is a treasure of new ideas with historical and philosophical features," "This is the first ever successful attempt to review the history in its inseparable links with the fate of the nation, country and other peoples," and "The *Ruhnama* shows the logic of human civilization's progress and overcomes the confusions which lead scientific thought to a dead end."[50]

Although it is unique in some ways, *Ruhnama* as an ideology shares many elements with other post-colonial sultanistic doctrines, including many of its basic themes. *Ruhnama* deals at various points with national unity, an end to tribalism, threats to the Turkmen state, the importance of authority and respect, and a glorification of Turkmen history and ancient culture and national heroes that will be discussed in the following chapter. According to a Dashoguz-based Peace Corps volunteer, "the drive to promote and in many ways create a Turkmen culture… does provide an identity for the people, but at the same time is used to exclude minority groups and severely interrupt a normal educational curriculum. Nationalism and history are pushed to an extreme, while unity is preached, but far from practiced…."[51]

[49] Report on Ashgabat Channel One (in Russian), television programme 29 March 2002
[50] *ibid*.
[51] Interview with Peace Corps Volunteer "C", 2005

Historical national greatness might be the most central theme of the official nationalist program in Turkmenistan. "Maintaining and restoring symbols of past glories are central to the drive for national revival. The state appreciates the importance of challenging Soviet interpretations of Turkmens as 'backward' and 'uncivilized' prior to their incorporation into the Russian empire. Attaining national self-respect is invariably linked to the historical image of the Turkmen 'nation.'"[52] Another element of this nationalism, which will be explored further in the next chapter, is love of the fatherland (*Watan*), which now occupies a centre stage in official doctrine. Akbarzadeh writes, "Fostering the language-based Turkmen nation is ultimately constrained by territorial considerations. The present boundaries of Turkmenistan are seen by the state as marking the ancient motherland of Turkmens and it is in conjunction with these territorial criteria that the Turkmen identity is hoped to be crystallized. For this reason, promoting patriotism and loyalty to *watan* has become critical to state policies."[53] The ubiquitous nature of the slogan *Halk-Watan-Turkmenbashy* (People-Fatherland-Turkmenbashy) exhibits the importance of this concept—"The state presents itself as the guardian of *watan* and justifies its policies, whether economic, social, or diplomatic, by that criterion. *Watan* and the Turkmen nation are treated as synonyms. In December1994, Niyazov formulated this approach: 'All that we do must be directed at serving the people, in defence of the population. Every leader, every citizen must work diligently, and honestly, to carry out his duties to the motherland (*watan*). Today everyone must rise to serve the people."[54]

Political religion is a concept very salient in the case of Turkmenistan. A

[52] S. Akbarzadeh, "National Identity and Political Legitimacy in Turkmenistan," *Nationalities Papers* 2(2): 271-290 (1999), p. 275
[53] *ibid*., 278
[54] *ibid*., 279

Dashoguz-based Peace Corps volunteer says, "A political religion is definitely prevalent in Turkmenistan. The national oath and anthem are treated as "sacred," as is the *Ruhnama* itself."[55] Turkmenistan's national oath forms part of the everyday ritual, and indeed is endowed with sacred characteristics, and has powerful mortal connotations. The oath translates roughly:

> Oh, Turkmenistan, my beloved Motherland
>
> My dear country,
>
> My thoughts and my heart belong to you
>
> May my hand wither if you are maligned
>
> May my tongue turn numb if you are vilified
>
> May I stop breathing if my Motherland,
>
> Saparmurat Turkmenbashy the Great
>
> And the sacred flag are betrayed.

"Sacred" and "holy" are words that appear with great regularity in political discourse, especially in connection with *Ruhnama*. *Ruhnama*, aside from its autobiographical and pseudo-historical content, is filled with truisms often cloaked in the form of revelations sent to the author from on high, or from Turkmen ancestors and great heroes of the past. Denison writes of *Ruhnama*, "Although its content is a rather loosely structured mixture of Turkmen genealogy, history, personal reflection, charming homilies and moral injunctions, *Ruhnama* is undoubtedly intended to be a spiritual if not directly religious text."[56]

Turkmenistan's cabinet, on the 10th anniversary of Niyazov's presidential election, issued a statement: "In writing the sacred book *Ruhnama*, you have rendered not only your beloved Turkmen people but also the entire world community an

[55] Interview with PCV "C", 2005
[56] Denison, 14

invaluable service. And we will always love you and be proud that our people had the good fortune to have so wise and magnanimous a serdar (leader)—a man of outstanding capabilities, whom the people rightly compare with the Prophet."[57] Members of the *Mejilis* on the same occasion stated: "The sacred *Ruhnama*, born of your genius, is a veritable treasure house, from which we all now draw spiritual strength and knowledge…" and the participants in the conference called "Saparmurat Turkmenbashy—Great Politician of the Present Day" wrote "Each citizen of the Turkmen state, over with the Great Serdar (Leader), who received the prophetic blessing of the Almighty for his being the support of his people, presides. We bow before you, our Great Saparmurat-Turkmenbashy."[58] Niyazov stated in 2002: "A person can become morally clear and spiritually strong by reading the *Ruhnama* thoroughly, by accepting instructions and exhortations with all his heart and by following them…."[59]

In 2004, a new mosque (the largest in Central Asia) was opened in Niyazov's home village of Kipjak in Ahal welayat. The minarets are engraved with quotations from Ruhnama, and inside this mosque and others, copies of *Ruhnama* are placed next to copies of the Koran. Religious officials, all state-approved, are required to teach *Ruhnama* as part of their religious lessons. On the first Saturday (*Ruh Gun*) in the month of September (*Ruhnama*) in 2002 (the first year of the new calendar), Turkmen clerics preached *Ruhnama* lessons during regular worship sessions. Reporting on events in the Ashgabat Ar Togrul Gazy mosque, a television correspondent said: "Clerics, elders, and other people from all regions of our country gathered here. Those who gathered praised our beloved leader's sacred *Ruhnama* and learnt its lines of

[57] in Y. Dementyeva, "Portrait of the Dictator in the Interior of Modern Turkmenistan," *Gundogar opposition* website 2002, available online at www.gundogar.org, p. 5
[58] *ibid*., 6
[59] Report on Ashgabat Channel One (in Russian), television programme 05 December 2002

pearls and wisdom. They preached brilliant ideas and precepts from it."[60] In December 2001, the heads of the council of religious affairs of Turkmenistan met to hail the *Ruhnama*. They stated: "Today the whole world is amazed by its spiritual force. This fundamental work created by your genius is your miraculous gift to the lovely nation in its golden age. Calling on each person to show cleanliness, kindness, charity, generosity, self-control, frugality, patriotism, unity and solidarity, the book leads us to understanding forever the great truth, that the further development of the state is only possible with the consolidation of the society. The holy *Ruhnama is put on a level with the holy Koran* at all the mosques in Turkmenistan."[61]

Familial metaphor is also prominent in Turkmenistan. From the adoption of the name Turkmenbashy to the promotion of a cult surrounding Niyazov's mother, Gurbansoltan Eje, as the national maternal figure, Turkmenistan provides an extreme example of the elevation of a leader to national fatherhood, along with his parents. Niyazov's choice of the designation Turkmenbashy for his official title appears to be carefully calculated. Shortly after independence, he was called by the republican press "son of the Turkmen people"—this affectionate term reflected his upbringing parentless in a Soviet orphanage. Instead, Niyazov selected the title "Father of Turkmen," in the style of Ataturk, which "evokes images of a benevolent ruler in the same tradition as the khans of Khiva and Bukhara liked themselves to be known. Turkmenbashy demands respect and following among tribal chieftains, and hence strives to be the focal point of unity."[62]

An element of Niyazov's self-styled paternal image is his ornamental, ceremonial "giving of gifts" to the Turkmen people. Niyazov regularly and with much

[60] Report on Ashgabat Channel One (in Turkmen), television programme 07 September 2002
[61] Statement on Ashgabat Channel One television programme 16 December 2001 (my italics)
[62] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity", 274

grandiosity bestows large architectural works or basic needs such as foodstuffs upon selected segments of the population to mark holidays or special occasions. Additionally, electric energy, gas, and drinking water are provided free of charge in homes in Turkmenistan and rent is held artificially low. As an example, on the tenth anniversary of Turkmenistan's independence, in an address to an expanded cabinet session, Niyazov ordered a ten day holiday and an extra month's pay for workers, construction of a new paper mill, and free flour for the poor. He said, "It seems that we should distribute flour for needy people free of charge. Let those who are really in need take it for free."[63]

Gurbansoltan Eje and Atamurat Niyazov, the President's father and also a national hero in today's Turkmenistan, have been elevated to cult-icon status. The cult of parenthood in Turkmenistan may have several causes—first, Niyazov's own childhood as an orphan and lack of a close family. Second, unlike a son, brother, or possible successor, Niyazov's deceased parents represent no political threat to his regime and can never emerge as rivals. Their worship represents a visual reinforcement of ideas on Turkmen family values, a theme that Niyazov develops in some depth in *Ruhnama.* It develops the themes of parental sacrifice, symbolizes the suffering of older generations and lends historical depth to the regime—Niyazov's parents passed away in World War II, and the devastating Ashgabat earthquake in the late 1940s, tragedies that many older citizens can associate with, and which help citizens to sympathize with Niyazov.

Instruments of Propagation: Symbols and Ritual

A regime's control and manipulation of the symbolic world can be a powerful

[63] Report on Ashgabat Channel One television programme 10 August 2001

instrument of legitimation and demonstration of power.[64] The iconography of the state is expressed visually in flags, stamps, coinage, and currency; textually it can be explored in anthems, oaths, and pledges of allegiance. It has been noted, "The National Flag, the National Anthem, and the National Emblem are the three symbols through which an independent country proclaims its identity and sovereignty, and as such they command instantaneous respect and loyalty. In themselves they reflect the entire background, thought, and culture of a nation."[65] A regime that is seeking legitimacy will attempt to "appropriate the shared symbols that infuse everyday life with meaning" in order to enhance its power to create and sustain national fictions."[66] Lane writes, "The power of the symbol… springs from its three basic properties: polarization of meaning, condensation of meaning and multivocality (i.e. the accumulation over time of layer upon layer of meaning). At one pole of the symbol are clustered significata which refer to components of the moral and social order, while at the other pole significata are usually natural or physiological and arouse basic emotions."[67] Regimes often rely on historical symbols, either symbols that have been historically used in that country or symbols that reflect events or personalities from the nation's past.

Symbolism in Africa

Under Mobutu's rule, a shift occurred in the way national symbols were interpreted—traditional symbols became personalized to an extreme degree. N'Gambwa argues that "symbols were exploited and manipulated by the Mobutu regime to give them a more personal meaning, one that glorified and justified

[64] A. Heywood, *Political Ideas and Concepts* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1994), p. 98
[65] in Hobsbawm and Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 11, from R. Firth, *Symbols, Public and Private* p. 341
[66] Wedeen, 32
[67] Lane, 191

Mobutu's claim to the right to rule."[68]

Zairian flag

1971: 

For example, in the early years of Mobutu's rule, the Zairian flag was initially just the flag associated with the MPR, a banner of blue, red, and yellow with one star. There was nothing linking it explicitly to Mobutu. On the anniversary of the 3Z on 27 October 1971, a new flag was adopted, depicting a hand in the middle of a yellow circle, representing Mobutu's national reach. A salute to the flag became, in effect, a salute to the president.

Two symbols most closely associated with Mobutu were the leopard-skin hat and his cane, with which he was constantly adorned. These symbols had significance particularly in the context of traditional chieftaincy, and the leopard skin was meant to reflect Mobutu's physical strength and his prowess in hunting.

State Symbolism in Turkmenistan

Political symbolism is ubiquitous and constantly changing in Turkmenistan. That symbols are constantly manipulated underscores their important role as a tool of state ideology—the presidential administration goes to great lengths to have every sign repainted, newspaper reprinted, and portrait redone each time the presidential seal changes shape. Turkmenistan's major symbols include the state flag, the olive branch of neutrality, the Ahal-Tekke horse, the tribal carpet patterns and particularly the Tekke tribe's pattern, the face of the president's mother, and the presidential seal,

[68] N'Gambwa, 197

not to mention the ubiquitous presidential portraits which have become symbols in themselves. The image of the pink and green covered book *Ruhnama*, and more recently, its coupling with the rainbow-coloured *Ruhnama II*, has also become a dominant symbol of the country's official ideology. These symbols appear daily in the state-sponsored media and on books, papers, currency, and billboards. Images of newly constructed buildings and monuments in the centre of Ashgabat are also symbols frequently employed by the regime, but these deserve separate consideration for their architectural style and will be discussed in a later chapter.

Perhaps the most omnipresent of Turkmenistan's new symbols is the likeness of Niyazov. Officially, the symbol of the president is a golden profile, found in the upper right corner of television broadcasts, on the cover of *Ruhnama*, on lapel pins and cufflinks for officials, and on the welcome sign at the international airport in Ashgabat. Presidential portraits appear on street-side billboards, above government buildings and shopping centres, in shops and market kiosks and on car windshields. A Kazakhstan newspaper published an article by former Turkmenistan Foreign Minister Avdy Kuliev in 1997 about the growing personality cult, and recounted: "The propaganda supporting the cult of Niyazov has flourished especially since 1992, when a member of the presidential council hung his portrait in his office. He was followed by the governor of Maryyskiiy Oblast, who conferred the name of Niyazov upon a peasant union. The President was so flattered by the initiative of the two officials that he brought them close to himself, appointing them to responsible posts. Soon government functionaries across the entire country (hung presidential portraits)… The portraits of Niyazov, which appeared at first in offices, quickly clogged all institutions, including vegetable shops. Regional officials begged Niyazov to allow them to rename farms and factories in his honour. In the oblast centres, on farms and

on the squares of major cities, sculptures of Niyazov began to appear…."[69]

In October 1991, with the enactment of the laws decreeing independence for Turkmenistan, a special session of the Supreme Council of Turkmenistan simultaneously adopted a decree on the establishment of the new state symbols of the country: flag, emblem, and anthem. These were chosen as the result of a national competition announced by the president, and open to artists, designers, and creative collectives. The symbols were to reflect historical and national "peculiarities"—they best reflected "the ideas of sovereignty, independence, and national traditions of the Turkmen people."[70]

Turkmenistan State Flag

1953:  **1992:**  **1997:** 

Turkmenistan's flag, adopted on 19 February 1992—Niyazov's birthday, since 1995 celebrated as National Flag Day—is considered "the symbol of the nation's unity and independence and the country's neutrality."[71] The flag has a green background with a red vertical hoist stripe down the left side, containing prints of five ornamental tribal patterns often found in carpet design (known as *gul*). The *guls* are primarily black, white, and orange. Below the patterns are two crossed olive branches, added to the flag after the official declaration of the country's neutrality. Next to the red stripe is a crescent moon and five pentagonal starts, all white. The traditional green colour with the crescent symbolizes Islam, but in addition, the colour green was selected to lend historical depth to the banner—in a public statement, Niyazov described that green "had been the colour of the flag of our ancestors: Oghuzes,

[69] Avdy Kuliev, "A Dictator in the Personal Style," *Karavan* (Almaty: 1997, vol. 47), p. 11
[70] *Independent Neutral Turkmenistan: 10 Glorious Years of the Epoch of Turkmenbashi the Great* (Ashgabat: 1998), p. 36
[71] *ibid.,* 37

Seljuks…" and that "all national sacred things are personified in carpet ornaments depicted in our flag. The crescent means the prosperity, five stars—five welayats."[72] The five patterns, traditional carpet designs or *guls*, represent the five regions of the country (Ahal, Balkan, Mary, Dashoguz, and Lebap) as well as the major tribe of each region (Ahal Tekke, Yomut, Salor, Chowdor, and Ersary), and are meant to symbolize "the friendship and solidarity of Turkmen people."[73] On 29 January 1997, the crossed olive branch motif was added to the state flag. The crossed olive branches are the same as on the official United Nations Organization emblem, signifying Turkmenistan's place as the first neutral state in the world recognized by the UN. The state flag is permanently posted on the buildings of the Presidential Palace, *Mejilis* of Turkmenistan, Cabinet of Ministers of Turkmenistan, ministries, departments, other government bodies, bodies of local executive power and local self-government as well as on buildings of enterprises, institutions and organizations.[74]

The State Emblem

1992:  **2003:** 

On the same day as the adoption of the state flag in 1992, the state emblem (coat of arms) was accepted into the law, although it has undergone shape and symbol changes since its announcement. Until August 2003 the emblem consisted of three rings, each within another, but in August 2003 an octagonal star replaced the outer ring. Today, the emblem is in the shape of an eight-pointed star, with two concentric

[72] *ibid*.
[73] *ibid*.
[74] *ibid*.

circles inside—the smallest is blue and the larger circle is red. The background colour, as on the national flag, is green. Yanardag, the Ahal Tekke horse that is the most prized animal of Niyazov's collection, is depicted in the small blue circle in the emblem's centre. Yanardag is a symbol in his own right—born in 1991, he is the same age as independent Turkmenistan and also represents one of Turkmenistan's national treasures—their famous breed of Ahal Tekke horses. Tall and elegant with strong, long legs, the Ahal Tekke horse is well adapted to the harsh dry climate of the Turkmen steppes, and since ancient times it was regarded as one of the fastest racing horses in the region. Yanardag is also known as Altyn Dag—the "Golden Horse" of the golden age, because of the colour of its coat. Five national patterns are depicted on the red circular strip. The carpet patterns are placed in sequence, as on the national flag: Ahal tekke, Yomut, Salor, Chowdur and Ersary, again symbolizing the friendship and solidarity of Turkmen people. The lower part of the large green start depicts seven open pentaleaf boxes of white cotton with green leaves framed by golden-yellow edging. In the middle part four ears of wheat of golden yellow colour are shown on each side; each contains 28 grains. Seven open cotton heads with green leaves are also depicted on the emblem. They symbolize the "prosperity and wealth of people."[75] The top section of the star also contains, as on the flag, a crescent moon and five stars.

The Presidential Flag

In addition to the national flag, there is a flag specifically symbolizing the

[75] *ibid.*, 38

presidency of Turkmenistan. It is the symbol of presidential power, and was approved on 15 July 1996. The green-coloured flag portrays the white crescent moon and five pentagonal starts from the national flag, and the centre of the flag contains a golden five-headed eagle, three heads of which look to the left hand side of the flag and two to the right side. The multi-headed eagle is meant to observe historical traditions—there was, it is claimed, a two-headed eagle on the flag of Oghuz Han, and the number five represents again the country's five regions.

Official Ritual as a Device of Sultanistic Control

Ritual, which has been defined as "a stylized, repetitive social activity that, through the use of symbolism, expresses and defines social relations," is of central importance in Niyazov's regime legitimation.[76] The literature on ritual largely concerns its social control function, although Lane, in her analysis of Soviet ritual, cites also the capacities of ritual to "express and canalize individual emotions... and to satisfy aesthetic needs through utilizing and uniting the creative arts in ritual form.[77] Many forms of political rule have sought legitimacy through "encouraging expressions of popular consent." Considerable effort is invested into the mobilization of mass support for regime activity through rallies, demonstrations, marches, and plebiscites.[78] Theatrically, as Young writes, "the state represents itself in resplendent ceremonial: inaugurations and coronations, parades displaying its military might, rituals of national commemoration."[79] "Spectacles demonstrate the regime's desired representation of itself—as loved, representative, and popular—but they also enact the regime's ability to discipline bodies and determine the iconographic content of

[76] Lane, 11
[77] *ibid.,* 19
[78] Heywood, 98
[79] Young 34

public space."[80] Wedeen writes, "Treatments of spectacles as texts reveal them to be compelling pictures of the tensions, fears, and hopes that define a particular political epoch. Spectacles dramatize the aspirations of the regime, but also promote images designed to convey certain ideas to spectators."[81]

Ritual expresses the values and norms of its creators, although all of the participants might not be fully aware of all of its social and political implications. In Soviet society, Lane concluded, ritual was a method used by political elites to gain acceptance for what they defined as crucial social relations, and therefore must "be viewed as an instrument of cultural revolution or, to indicate less spectacular cultural changes, of cultural management."[82] In her consideration of Syria, Wedeen cites Foucault's work in demonstrating the ways in which ritual can be effective for political regimes aiming for legitimacy. She points to three ways in which ritualistic spectacles directly serve political ends. "First, orchestrated spectacles discipline the participants and organize them for the physical enactment of ritual gestures, regimenting their bodies into an order that both symbolizes and prepares for political obedience. Second, spectacles are not only a preparation for but also themselves already instantiations of political power. They dramatize the state's power by providing occasions to enforce obedience, thereby creating a politics of pretence in which all participate but few actually believe. Third, spectacles serve to anchor visually and audibly politically significant ideas and self-conceptions that might otherwise remain fluid and abstract. They ground political thinking in the images and symbols the regime puts forth, framing the ways people see themselves as citizens, much as advertising offer people a frame in which they imagine themselves as

[80] Wedeen, 21
[81] *ibid*., 13
[82] Lane, 27

consumers."[83]

Holiday as Forum For National Ritual

Holidays provide a common context for ritual, both political holidays and holidays of the religious or calendric cycle. Holiday is a much wider concept than ritual, generally containing a set of festive activities of which ritual is only one. However, writes Lane, "usually ritual is the central activity determining the holiday's special character."[84] Holidays and new rituals are publicized, through something of a political advertising campaign, in states aiming to create new legitimating doctrines. Massive editions of placards and photographic albums about the new ritual as well as brochures stating its scenario bring it to people's notice. The first performances of the new rituals are "given coverage in the press and on television, and discussions of the new ritual within various political organizations are encouraged."[85]

In post-colonial situations, new national holidays are commonly established to embed elements of nationalist history and to create independent traditions—under patrimonial rule, holidays that glorify the leader and the leader's programs are also celebrated with great fanfare. This was certainly true in sub-Saharan Africa in the 1960s. Of the experience in Zaire, one of N'Gambwa's respondents said, "I have never been in a country where there are so many holidays, and most of them linked, directly or indirectly, to one man's life."[86] The Creation of the MPR was celebrated on May 20th, and preceded in schools by the teaching of the history of the creation of the Party and the Party's role in fostering national unity. This holiday was hugely celebrated with ritual prepared months in advance. A Zairian teacher recounts, "For

[83] Wedeen, 19
[84] Lane, 15
[85] *ibid.,* 50
[86] N'Gambwa, 199

Mobutu, this was absolutely a big deal. Guests were invited from all over the world. He wanted to show the world how peaceful and united Zaire had become thanks to him and his party. It was also, I guess, the opportunity for him to show to the outside world that Zairian people were happy and liked him… People were dressed in special uniforms with Mobutu's face on them and sang all kinds of glorifying songs favourable to Mobutu. They danced and paraded. In a nutshell, the country for 24 hours appeared happy."[87]

Animation and Marches in Zaire

Zaire's ritual commonly took the form of animation. *Animation politique* was the "action of education, of transmission and vulgarization of the Party's message through songs…and slogans… in order to exalt and glorify the authentic Zairian Revolution and its Guide."[88] Callaghy writes, "Animation groups consist of women and men who sing and dance political slogans and messages. A conscious effort has been made to adapt traditional music and dances to the new political religion. Traditional songs and dances have been systematically collected and adapted to a new political medium. Animation is considered to be, however, a traditionally authentic form of political expression and glorification: 'In authentic Zairian culture, the song is both a pedagogical tool and a way of symbolizing social harmony.' Animation is at the core of the practice of the political religion of Mobutuism."[89]

Regime monitors carefully controlled the political content of the songs. N'Gambwa writes that the concepts expounded through animation reveal two things: "their importance in cementing the ideological merit of Mobutuism on the one hand

[87] in N'Gambwa, 200
[88] *ibid*., 138
[89] Callaghy, 325

and the nebulous and ambiguous nature of these terms on the other."[90] "Animation slogans, songs, and skits glorify Mobutu and his thoughts, actions, and achievements. They also stress such things as order, discipline, work, national unity, authenticity, the political history of the triumph over chaos by Mobutu, economic independence, Salongo, and agriculture…."[91] Popular slogans included lines such as *MPR= servir et non se servir* (MPR = to serve and not to serve oneself); *Ni a gauche, ni a droite, ni meme au centre* (neither to the left or to the right, not even in the middle); *Fidelite au Guide* (loyalty to the Guide) and *MPR miso gaa* (MPR eyes wide open).[92] During these gatherings, not only were concepts of Mobutuism recited, by they were also explained by officials.

In addition to animation skits, marches in support of Mobutu formed one of the core elements of ritual. Known as the *marches de soutien*, these political activities were bigger and more significant in scope than daily animations. All were organized from above. Educational groups, which often provided the most lively participants, were drawn upon heavily to help enlarge the turnout at these events. "These ceremonies, which consisted of long walks, the singing of revolutionary songs, and the mouthing out of the MPR slogans, provided the party with yet another channel to disseminate the teachings of Mobutuism."[93]

Ritual in Turkmenistan

Independent Turkmenistan has a huge number of new holidays that have been created since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Flag Day, which falls on the President's birthday at the end of February, Memorial Day (after the Goktepe battle),

[90] N'Gambwa, 141
[91] Callaghy, 326
[92] In N'Gambwa, 139
[93] *ibid*., 149

Gurbansoltan Eje's birthday, a Drop of Water is a Grain of Gold Day, Turkmen Muskmelon Day, and Turkmen Horse Day, along with holidays from Soviet times, are celebrated with parades, concerts, and presidential speeches. The newspaper *Adalat* even proposed the naming of a holiday to honour the President's favourite horse, Yanardag.[94] The resurrection of pre-Soviet celebrations such as Novruz, Kurban-Bairam and Oraza has also occurred.

Holidays in Turkmenistan are ritualized, and mass political-cultural demonstrations form the central ritual of most national holidays. In fact, these types of demonstrations reflect continuing Soviet-style planning; as in the USSR, "it is common knowledge that participation in… the procession-demonstration, is organized from above. Each work collective selected for participation in the demonstration during a particular year mobilizes as many of its employees as will make up a contingent."[95]

Muskmelon Day, celebrated in early August, is one of Turkmenistan's newly created holidays. In 2003, on the occasion of Muskmelon Day, Niyazov sent a congratulatory letter to the people of Turkmenistan, and a news commentator announced, "This Godsend—the Turkmen melon—has a glorious history that goes back centuries. Turkmen melons, which are the product of Turkmenistan's blazing sun, mild weather, productive land and tasty water, as well as peasant's kindness, were considered a miracle by historians, politicians and traders in the early and middle ages. Since we became independent, our great leader, who has a great love of his nation and country, has brought the name of tasty melons to the level of a national holiday. Saparmurat Turkmenbashy the great is paying great attention to Muskmelon

[94] *Adalat* Turkmenistan newspaper, 21 December 2001
[95] Lane, 55

Day in line with other state issues, so that this day becomes a real holiday."[96] On that date, main festivities were held in the Ashgabat concert hall in Independence Square. The hall was surrounded by flowers, greenery, colourful flags, and many sorts of melons, as well as songs and lively dancing. Reflecting on the celebration, a television commentator reported, "The sweet smell of melons, that is capable of making one swoon and making one's hungry stomach feel full, was in harmony with these celebrations. It made the love towards one's dear homeland, the great leader, and kind nation grow even stronger."[97]

Independence Day (October 27th) is celebrated with a large parade through Ashgabat, prominently featuring a display of Turkmenistan's military tanks and a fly-over of Russian MiG fighter jets. An Ashgabat stadium is filled with teachers and workers, who are pressured to attend from all of the welayats, and the day is filled with traditional shows of Turkmen dance. A Peace Corps volunteer speculates that citizens are forced to attend the spectacles "to make the stadium look fuller for filming on national television and to make it appear as though the entire populace is happy to no longer live under Soviet rule… but if they were not forced, I am sure the stadium would be half-empty."[98] Outside of Ashgabat, the holiday is celebrated primarily by the consumption of large quantities of vodka at home.

A Peace Corps volunteer who attended the Victory Day celebrations last year (this is a Russian holiday that originated after World War II) recounts: "hundreds of people were forced to wait in the sweltering sun for two hours in an extremely disorganized manner until anything official began. In the meantime, people fretted and made sure their names appeared on the list that each workplace's supervisor had

[96] Report on Ashgabat Channel One television programme, evening 11 August 2003
[97] *ibid*.
[98] Interview with Peace Corps Volunteer "N", 2005

to turn in to the authorities to ensure that no one present would later be punished by the KNB. Once the ceremony began, a loudspeaker crackled a sombre song on a loop while we proceeded towards a statue of Turkmenbashy's father to place flowers…. This 'procession' involved a lot of pushing and shoving… so the entire procedure looked very unprofessional. The path which we walked along towards the monument was lined with Turkmen soldiers, all equipped with rifles… Turkmen dresses were expected but not absolutely required, and earlier in the morning, some dances were performed by students."[99]

Speeches, songs, dances, costumes, readings and poetry are all parts of regional and national celebrations. Huge amounts of money and time are put into the celebrations that are typically held in Ashgabat's stadium. Participants are often paid, or promised payment and gifts in exchange for participation. Dancers are taken from all over the country, often are drawn from hospitals and schools. When this occurs, clinics close and classes are cancelled to support ritual participation. An aspect of most celebrations is an extensive fireworks display—as one Peace Corps volunteer says, "Some people stare up at them in awe, while others look at them and say, 'there goes our salary for this month.'"[100] National costume plays a major role, symbolically, in official ritual: people of all ages are required to don national dress. Men wear fur hats, boys wear skullcaps, and girls are required to wear Turkmen dresses and braids, and women don traditional dresses and huge *yakas.*

In Turkmenistan, children comprise the bulk of the participants in official ritual dances and parades. These ritual activities take place outside of the holiday context, often on the occasion of a presidential visit to a given welayat, program, office, or school. "Children are almost always required to participate—usually they

[99] *ibid*.
[100] Interview with Peace Corps Volunteer "C", 2005

recite a poem, or something from the Ruhnama, or perform dances."[101] Officials generally select the most physically attractive students, and this can be considered an honour. Many, however, "view it as a waste of time because they hold extremely disorganized rehearsals for days prior, then sometimes find out at the last minute that the President is not even attending the event."[102]

Media in Turkmenistan

In Turkmenistan, the state-controlled media have become important instruments of the governmental policy of national revival and *Ruhnama*. From explicit calls to ideological action, to Presidential cult management and repetition of regime symbols, the national newspapers and television programs in Turkmenistan are little more than mouthpieces of Niyazov's regime. Major news programs carry almost no daily news apart from the President's declarations or activities.[103] Television news begins with a prayer and good wishes for the President, and nationalist propaganda from costumes to recitations, and song and dance fill the programming. Television reporters and commentators praise *Ruhnama* and use epithets such as "compassionate," "merciful", and "esteemed" when talking about Niyazov.

Similarly, every day, large photos of Niyazov cover the front pages of all of the nation's daily newspapers. Newspaper banners are filled with words from the national oath and presidential quotations, and various symbols of the regime. An analysis of the Turkmen newspaper *Neytralnyy Turkmenistan* (formerly *Turkmenskaya Iskra*) from 1991 to 2001 demonstrates the changes in symbology over time. This analysis shows a relatively steady increase in photos and articles relating to

[101] Interview with Peace Corps Volunteer "N", 2005
[102] *ibid*.
[103] Kuru, 75

Niyazov over time, as well as an increase in these photos and articles as a percentage of informational content of the newspaper itself. Whereas, in 1991, the front page of *Turkmenskaya Iskra* contained very little in the way of photographs and only Soviet symbolism, by 2001 the newspaper's cover had turned into a colourful, picture-filled page glorifying the president and covered with regime symbols and slogans, with only one or two news articles of note (Refer to Appendix A).

Figure 2

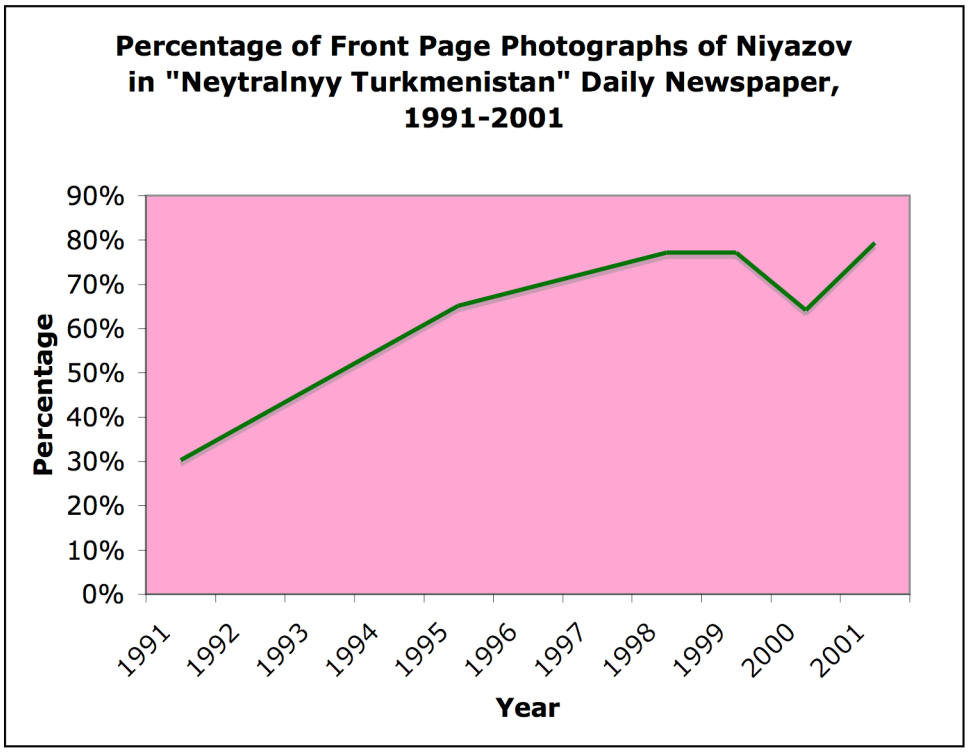
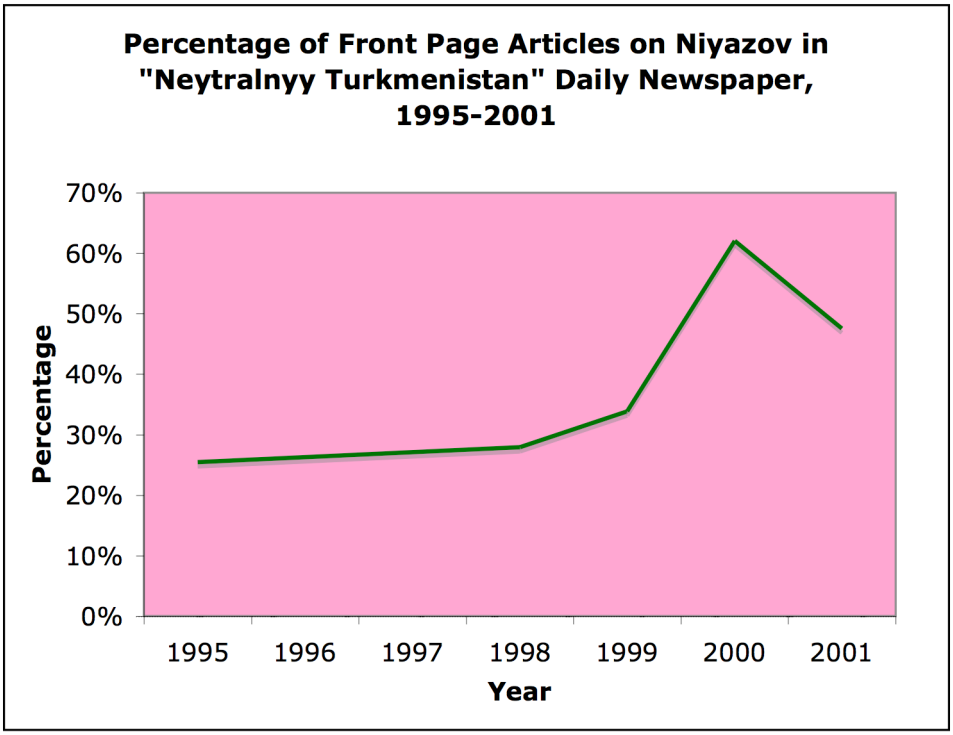


Figure 3



Education as a Vehicle of Sultanistic Propagation

Education, generally, is one of the social institutions most likely to be exploited by a regime. Education targets a vulnerable yet central part of a citizenry—the youth. Schatzberg writes, "if the politically dominant elements of… society wish to insure the loyalty of the nation's youth, effective political and ideological control must be maintained throughout the educational system."[104] Education functions in three ways as a key element of political development: first, it is the main agent for the political socialization of the nation's youth into the dominant political culture; second, educational systems are primary agents in the selection and training of future political elites; and finally, education is the main contributor to "political integration and the building of national political consciousness." Schooling, then, is an educational mechanism for political functions.[105] In cases of sultanistic rule, education can be a

[104] in N'Gambwa, 17
[105] Coleman, quoted by N'Gambwa, 17

prime vehicle for political socialization and regime propaganda, producing compliance with the pseudo-ideology and perhaps even the seeds of belief through repetition and isolation.

In sub-Saharan Africa in the post-colonial period, regimes used the educational systems left over from the colonial periods as mechanisms for transference of new regime philosophies. Simply through the introduction of new curricula, schooling became a new mechanism of control. In Zaire, reforms in educational curricula became one of Mobutu's most potent tools for propagating his personalist pseudo-ideology in the country. In the late 1960s a new educational curriculum replaced the teaching of religion and morals in schools—it was highly personalized and promoted *Mobutuisme* or the views and actions of the President. In the early years of Zaire's independence, a major function of education was to instill in young people a sense of loyalty to and identification with Zaire as a nation. The nationalist focus, however, gradually shifted to a more overt emphasis on using schools as vehicles to "promote the image of… Mobutu as the symbol of hope, peace, prosperity and unity in an attempt to legitimate his rule and, ultimately, that of his regime."[106]

Education in Turkmenistan

Although Turkmenistan inherited a well-developed system from the Soviet period that offered free and near-universal education for all citizens, policies adopted by Niyazov's regime in recent years have significantly reduced the length and quality of education; at the same time, Niyazov has engineered an educational system that has become a major propaganda vehicle for his regime. In Turkmenistan today, in fact,

[106] N'Gambwa, 11

educational curriculum is little more than an extension of the regime's propagation of the pseudo-ideology that it has devised through *Ruhnama*. The International Crisis Group reports "the government perceives (education) as a tool for official propaganda and development of the Niyazov personality cult."[107] The degradation of education in Turkmenistan is potentially one of the worst social aspects of the regime—the growth of a generation of Turkmen who are "increasingly poorly educated, ignorant of life outside Turkmenistan, and possess no alternative viewpoints to those of the official curriculum and the Ruhnama represents a great danger for society."[108]

On 3 May 1993, Niyazov's regime launched a comprehensive program of educational reform known as *Bilim* (education). The program was legislated further under a decree "On Education in Turkmenistan" in October 1993 and "On Ratification of State Program on Implementation of New Education Policies in Turkmenistan of President Saparmurat Turkmenbashy in 1993-1997" in November. These decrees provided for the reduction of all schools to a nine-year programme, and a process of conversion to Latin script for the Turkmen language. Hours allotted to certain school subjects were reduced and some disciplines (physical education, for example) were eliminated entirely. The number of students enrolled in the institutions of higher education has dropped from over 40,000 students before the reforms to a current figure of about 3,500.[109]

A shortage of textbooks and learning materials is one of the problems that has been associated with the transition in Turkmenistan's educational system. Data suggest that only 20 percent of the necessary number of textbooks is available in secondary schools,[110] and of those, 80 percent are over twelve years old. Primary

[107] "Cracks in the Marble", International Crisis Group Asia Report 44, (Brussels, 2003) p. 26
[108] *ibid.,* 27
[109] "Education in Turkmenistan," Turkmenistan Helsinki Initiative 12 (2004)
[110] *ibid.*, 3

school children are educated in the new Turkmen alphabet, cutting off their access to most books previously printed in Cyrillic that are kept in Ashgabat's National Library—regional libraries have recently been closed by presidential decree. New treatises, however, are printed by Niyazov's publishing services to fill the library and bookstore shelves. "Source of Wisdom," for example, is the name of a new textbook published for secondary school libraries by the State Publishing Service—10,000 copies were printed under orders from Turkmenistan's Ministry of Education. The book's introduction describes its contents—it "lists in alphabetical order abstracts from the three great poetical works of Saparmurat Niyazov, expounding his ideas and thoughts on nation unification, loyalty to the motherland, patriotism, courage, bravery, moral up-bringing, greatness of spirit, pureness of intentions and doings, etc. This valuable anthology of wisdom will be of great help to schoolchildren, students and teachers, both in the learning process and extra-curricula activities, such as concerts, competitions and exhibitions."[111]

Curricula have been dramatically changed in the period of reforms and especially since the publication of *Ruhnama* in 2001, and the system has become "an instrument of mass brainwashing, characterized by low standards, discrimination, and widespread corruption."[112] "Initially, the reform of the educational system in Turkmenistan appeared to be based on the need to abandon the communist ideology. As a result of a struggle with communist ideology, as well as shorter periods of education, the depth of mastery in virtually all school subjects has been limited. (In 2003), President Niyazov suggested excluding humanitarian and natural sciences from secondary and higher education curricula completely, calling them "obscure" and "disconnected from real life". *Ruhnama* has "replaced the bulk of teaching in

[111] Source: Agency «Turkmenistan: The Golden Age» from 05.05.2004 in Helsinki report
[112] International Crisis Group Asia Report 44, p. 26

most schools, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the population lives. Since old Soviet textbooks have been banned, and few new ones have been printed, students spend much of their time reading and studying the *Ruhnama*."[113]

Curricular reform in Turkmenistan represents more than just the nationalization of post-Soviet education, something that is anticipated and natural in a post-colonial situation. Instead of a new curriculum based on the mastery of national Turkmen works and history, education increasingly focuses on the achievements of Niyazov himself and his personal interests, and his philosophy as outlined in *Ruhnama*. Many prominent Turkmen writers and poets, such as Berdi Kerbabayev, Rakhim Essenov, Beki Seitakov, Tirkish Dzhumageldiyev, Khidir Deryayev and Nurmurad Sarykhanov, for example, receive little or no mention in textbooks and their pieces have in some cases been purged from curricula. While cutting humanitarian and natural science disciplines, such subjects as *History of Neutral Turkmenistan*, *Politics of Independence of Saparmurat Turkmenbashy the Great*, *Ruhnama as Spiritual Code of the Turkmen People*, as well as the so-called *Literary Heritage of Saparmurat Turkmenbashy* (consisting of a collection of his poems and biographies of the President and his parents) were added to the curriculum.

In Turkmenistan, exams and school curricula are taken from the newspaper. Teachers are not encouraged to deviate at all from these lesson plans, and could be punished for doing so—they are required to present each of their lessons to school officials for review. The Turkmenistan Ministry of Education encourages the policy of mastering all school disciplines through the prism of Niyazov`s works. An example of a mathematical word problem from the textbook on mathematics for the second grade of secondary school developed by the Ministry of Education follows: "Gulnara

[113] *ibid*.

was reading the book *Ruhnama*. She read six pages on the first day. On the second day, she read four pages more than on the first day. On the third day she read five pages less than on the second day. How many pages of *Ruhnama* did Gulnara read on the third day?"[114]

The curricula of secondary vocational schools are similarly composed. Here is a curriculum in Lyceum №22 of Ashgabat which trains store managers, shop-assistants, cooks and food technologists: 34 academic hours per week are allocated accordingly-- *Ruhnama* – six hours; Politics of Independence of Saparmurat Turkmenbashy the Great - six hours; History of Neutral Turkmenistan - three hours; Turkmen language - four hours; Teachings of Saparmurat Turkmenbashy - two hours; Turkmen literature – two hours; Disciplines on specialization (1) - five hours; Disciplines on specialization (2) - five hours; Vocational –practical training - two hours. It is evident that the time assigned for vocational and general disciplines is much less than devoted for the ideological subjects.

This element of Niyazov's program—the revision of national curricula and the introduction of *Ruhnama* into the classrooms—has great potential to seriously affect Turkmenistan's society and to leave lasting repercussions that outlive Niyazov. The so-called "dumbing down" of society through indoctrination, coupled with the isolation of the country's youth, may create a situation of vulnerability on the societal level for years to come.

Conclusion

In addition to regime symbols and official ritual, holidays, media, and education have all become methods of regime propagation in post-Soviet

[114] Helsinki Report, 4

Turkmenistan. By adopting these channels, the regime effectively has inserted itself into the daily habits of its citizenry, and virtually no life is untouched by the pervasive reach of state propaganda. Although for many of the older generation, the effect of this propaganda is likely more to frighten (through conviction of the regime's omnipotence and ubiquity) citizens into compliance with official ritual, the younger generation is slowly internalizing aspects of regime doctrine through schooling.

Ruhnama is the catch-all for the various strands of regime doctrine, or pseudo-ideology, preached throughout Turkmenistan in the contemporary period. Although it is unique to its context and country, *Ruhnama* shares many of its themes with similar regimes throughout the world. Its extreme nationalism, sacred characteristics, and elements of patriarchal patrimonialism are shared by African post-colonial leaders, and specifically by those who have been characterized as sultans. The pronounced cult of personality, additionally, is common to sultanistic regimes. In Turkmenistan, the personality of Niyazov is inserted into regime doctrine in a way that centrally characterizes sultanism—like Mobutu and others, Niyazov has placed himself at the epicentre of Turkmenistan's legitimation doctrine. It is likely that *Ruhnama* will not outlive Turkmenbashy (or at least will decline in importance in a post-Niyazov period), in the same way that *Mobutuisme* did not continue in its original form after the end of Mobutu's reign. Mobutu's Zaire is just one example of an African sultan preaching a pseudo-ideology—Authenticity and *Mobutuisme*—that can lend a useful context for consideration of Niyazov's doctrine of *Ruhnama* in Turkmenistan.

CHAPTER FIVE

NIYAZOV'S PROJECT OF HISTORICAL REVISION

The creation of new national ideologies in a post-colonial period goes beyond just the symbols and rituals of the state. Working to embed these ideologies and these new nationalisms, leaders propagate their nationalisms through various channels. One important dimension is official historiography. As Lowe has written, "In the creation of a national ideology, history plays a valuable if not dominant, role, as perceptions of the past are essential for the creation of a national self-consciousness."[1]

National history is a tailored discourse written to institute a particular collective memory among a people. Gilbert writes, "National history can be a record of a nation's experience, which supposedly makes of it a community, or a record of its actions, which implies its political existence as a corporate body. Yet the difficulties of individuating histories are as great as those of individuating nations."[2] National histories, though difficult to individuate, are essential to nationalists. As Eric Hobsbawm famously remarked, "Historians are to nationalism what poppy growers in Pakistan are to heroin addicts: we supply the essential raw material for the market."[3] Hobsbawm discusses the idea of "invented tradition" as creating historical myth and propagating it to support a project of state building. He writes, "Plenty of political institutions, ideological movements and groups, not least in nationalism, were so unprecedented that even historic continuity had to be invented, for example by creating an ancient past beyond effective historical continuity, either by semi-fiction or by forgery….We should not be misled by a curious, but understandable, paradox: modern nations and all their impedimenta generally claim to be the opposite of novel, namely rooted in the remotest antiquity, and the opposite of constructed, namely

[1] R. Lowe, "Nation Building and Identity in the Kyrgyz Republic," in T. Everett-Heath, ed., *Central Asia: Aspects of Transition* (London and New York, Routledge, 2003), p. 121
[2] P. Gilbert, "History and Destiny," *The Philosophy of Nationalism* (Westview Press, 1998), 169
[3] Hobsbawm, in Touraj Atabaki slide, Central European University presentation, Budapest, July 2005

human communities so natural as to require no definition other than self-assertion."[4]

It is commonplace for a government to use historical symbols and historiography to "cultivate patriotism, explain and justify policies, and secure the acquiescence and cooperation of the people in times of crises."[5] Employing historical symbolism to forward themes such as shared identity, cultural renewal and regime legitimation is also common, especially in emerging states. Uzbekistan President Karimov emphasized, "Historical memory, the restoration of an objective and truthful history of the nation and its territory is given an extremely important place in the revival and growth of national self-consciousness and national pride... The deeds and feats of great ancestors enliven historical memory, shape a new civil consciousness, and become a source of moral education and imitation."[6] Often, however, this "objective and truthful" history is anything but-- while every form of history writing is biased in some way, in tightly controlled political systems the presentation of the historical record takes place either under state patronage, or under the regime's direct control. As Nourzhanov suggests, "historical narrative as a political phenomenon is less concerned with uncovering new or suppressed information, or providing a fresh angle on events in the bygone times based on professional scholarship, as it is with constructing a rounded, systematic, and uniform vision of the past... this is propaganda, as much as history."[7]

Historical revision, or even the creation of national histories, is not unique to Turkmenistan at all—quite the opposite, as Renan writes, "To forget and—I will venture to say—to get one's history wrong are essential factors in the making of a

[4] E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 14
[5] Kirill Nourzhanov, "The Politics of History in Tajikistan: Reinventing the Samanids," *Harvard Asia Quarterly* 5(1), 2001, p. 1
[6] Karimov, quoted in Nourzhanov, 1
[7] *ibid*.

nation."[8] The objective truth of a nation's history, in fact, while desirable from the academic viewpoint, may be less important for national cohesion than its "resilience"—all told, it is better that the national narrative not come into conflict with fact on a regular basis in the eyes of the members of the national community or its opponents. As Gilbert writes, "True histories are, other things being equal, more resilient than false ones; but whether facts do disturb false stories depends on whether their audiences have a concern for truth. Often they do not."[9]

Nationalist Historiography in sub-Saharan Africa

Nationalist historiography was widespread in the new African states emerging from colonial rule in the 1950s and 1960s; in our examples of sultanistic regimes, we see this nationalist writing fused with the personality and preferences of the leader to contribute to the pseudo-ideologies which provided a window-dressing for power. In many cases, a leader positioned himself as the saviour of the nation, the answer to the nation's yearning for freedom and independence, or the historical father (or magical father) of the country. While most of the African examples are not drawn from countries with claims to empire in antiquity, these leaders take pains to establish the lengthy historical importance of their territory and the people that comprise it, in order to substantiate claims to unity and nationhood, which underlie their authority.

As in Central Asia and other parts of the world, in Africa too "history is… an anvil of identity which is vulnerable to distortion by any monopolists of power. In Ngugi wa Thiongo's words, tyrants, whether colonial regimes or their successors, 'are terrified at the sound of the wheels of history… So they try to rewrite history, make up official history; if they can put cottonwool in their ears and in those of the

[8] quoted in Gilbert, 160
[9] *ibid.*, 161

population, maybe they and the people will not hear the real call of history, will not hear the real lessons of history,' which teach struggle and change. Much of Africa's written history has indeed taken the part of its rulers rather than that of its people."[10] This nationalist revision differs in certain ways from what we see today in post-Soviet Central Asia. The major difference is the legacy of history writing from the colonial period. Whereas in the Soviet Union, serious attention was paid to the development of national histories for the titular populations of each of the new Central Asian republics, in colonial Africa, the situation differed. There, the superiority of the Western colonizers was emphasized in schools, and the histories taught were those of the colonial powers and the colonial period. The mantra for the pre-independence periods was "Africa has no history."[11] No departments for the study of African history and no particular specialists existed in academic arenas, marking a huge departure from the Soviet method. After World War II, the situation changed with the emergence of African scholarship about Africa. New scholars from abroad took on the study of African history, discovering patterns of pre-colonial migration and the rise and fall of African empires. Social history, Ekeh argues, became an active arm of decolonization, as a reaction to colonial social anthropology.[12]

After independence, African regimes took up the project of constructing nationalist historiographies. The ways in which new regimes would approach history writing were unclear at first, because it seemed to many that since African states had such brief histories (versus the very long histories of most African *peoples*), to write any deep historical enquiry would touch the very foundations of the state's fragile

[10] J. Lonsdale, "African Pasts in Africa's Future," *Canadian Journal of African Studies* 23(1):126-146, (1989), p. 128
[11] I. Wallerstein, *Africa: The Politics of Independence, An Interpretation of Modern African History* (New York: Vintage Books, Random House, 1961), p. 126
[12] P. Ekeh, "Social Anthropology and Two Contrasting Uses of Tribalism in Africa", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 32(4):660-700 (1990), p. 671

legitimacy. Accordingly, regimes sought to control the processes of history writing. "Conscious efforts have been made by African governments to review educational curricula at all levels in order to reorient the history that is taught. Many countries have built museums before libraries. Historical journals have been started… and children's books are being written on African historical themes."[13]

Lonsdale suggests that the four major areas of post-colonial African historical enquiry are the state, custom, ethnicity, and religion.[14] Some of the general themes that were emphasized at first were the greatness of pre-colonial African empires (for example, the Ashanti or the Zulu), and particularly that their expansion at times was forcibly stopped and their empires partly destroyed by Europeans, that "the important African achievements went unrealized because of colonial penetration"—a narrative of victimization. Whereas the colonial anthropologies considered the principal actors in pre-colonial times to be faceless, nameless tribesmen, "the new social history celebrated the deeds and lineages of kings and warriors, particularly those challenging the European invaders and conquerors."[15] The problem, however, was that greater research revealed unpleasant facts. For example, research eventually revealed that "when they faced the European scramble in the late nineteenth century, kingdoms generally put up a brittle and short-lived show of resistance, by comparison with peoples who were not burdened with dynasties and palaces. In their death-throes kingdoms broke up along their internal fault lines—through the defection of subject provinces, the flight of slaves, and quarrels among princes."[16] Aside from uncovering pre-colonial kingdoms, the questions of populations' origins took on a primary importance, particularly for the populations of West Africa—the Akan and the

[13] Wallerstein, 126
[14] Lonsdale, 130
[15] Ekeh, "Tribalism", 672
[16] Lonsdale, 131

Yoruba among others.

Many regime historiographies placed heavy emphasis on national "customs" and the reintroduction or glorification of national customs—as we have seen, Mobutu's regime called for a return to Zairian authenticity. Africa's first independent leaders used myths of monarchical consensus and tribal reciprocity to legitimate one-party rule and to initiate programs from above. However, according to Lonsdale, this actually represents more a misinterpretation or denial of history—in fact, the customs that are being described as "authentic" and pre-colonial were actually products more of the colonial era. For example, the ideas of African kingship and chieftaincy, while they existed prior to the colonial era, took on their contemporary meanings under the Europeans. Colonial officials attempted to establish political alliances with the lords of the land to further legitimate their own rule—because of this, they institutionalized "custom" and traditional ideas of authority to support their own rule. Lonsdale writes, "The formal ideology of custom exalted authority through its insistence that African societies had none of that historical complexity and inequality which would render political argument essential to their stability. Custom was formalized in the turbulent early colonial years, when the powers of chiefs and heads of households were threatened by the new freedoms… Colonial conquest had helped the *building* of African power, by its offers of alliance with European violence; but the colonial *pax* and markets also allowed the *vulgarization* of power in the emergence of new occupational and religious associations."[17] In this way, codification of customary law acted more as a device of social control than a historical representation.

Tribalism, or rather ethnicity,[18] is another point of interest in African

[17] *ibid.*, 132

[18] As Ekeh tells us, social anthropologies and particularly postindependence African historians have rejected the use of the terms "tribe" and "tribalism" in favor of the looser designation "ethnic group" and "ethnicity", although during the colonial period the majority of scholarship on the matter

historiographies. Generally, since political tribalism does exist, the strategy of the leader is to avoid or transcend it. Lonsdale writes, "It is generally argued that since coerced assimilation has so often evoked ethnic revivals rather than built new nations, the only way forward is for neutral statesmen to avoid public debate on cultural issues. It is difficult to see how public avoidance can be prevented from sliding into state suppression."[19] Tribalism, Ekeh writes, "emerged into wide use in postcolonial Africa as a term apparently borrowed from the vocabulary of social anthropology and then inverted into a despised meaning."[20] Though custom purportedly respects the political language of African tribes, "ethnicity is also seen as the bugbear of contemporary Africa. Thus, history is plundered for its symbols of authority yet feared for its divisive fascination with the corporate embodiments of those same symbols in an era when the unity of societies within the state boundaries inherited from white conquest is the chief aim of 'nation-building.'"[21] Religion has historically been another devisive factor in certain African societies and therefore has been handled similarly to ethnicity in certain cases, depending on the makeup of the population.

As important as the subjects that were covered are the subjects that were avoided. Wallerstein writes, "Aspects of history that usually have been avoided thus far are the more recent colonial period and the nationalist movements… the authors are often too involved in this very history, and find the subjects too delicate."[22] Lonsdale writes, "the social history of colonial states has scarcely begun to be studied with the rigor which their records allow."[23] Nationalist historiography almost always

constructed the issues in terms of tribes.
[19] Lonsdale, 137
[20] Ekeh, "Tribalism", 689
[21] Lonsdale, 134
[22] Wallerstein, 127
[23] Lonsdale, 131

has three distinctive elements- the recasting or redefining of a nation, the rejection of other identities, and "selective amnesia"—the omission of certain eras, figures, or allies from a historical narrative. These themes, the return to national historical greatness, and the historical amnesia surrounding themes of recent political events and any element of the national character or history that is perceived as a threat to the stability or security of the current regime, are as true in post-Soviet Central Asia as in post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa, and additionally, under the sultanistic regimes we see a fascinating fusion of this historiography with the background of the leader himself, who is tied to the country's greatness.

In Equatorial Guinea, so great was Macias Nguema's belief in a return to custom and African roots that he purged his country of all Western influence, even medicine, resulting in the deaths of many among his population. Another good example of the type of nationalist historiography under sultanism is found in Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda's Malawi. In Malawi, the 1960s marked the beginnings of historical research, teaching and public discourse. Banda, an educated man who spent most of his young life overseas or outside of Malawi, "believed in the existence of a phenomenon called Malawian culture," which he invented, or allowed to be invented, and used to sustain himself in power.[24]

The adoption of the name Malawi (for the former colony Nyasaland) was itself a correction of colonial representations—Nyasaland was derived from *Nyasa*, the name that explorer David Livingstone had given to the third largest freshwater lake in Africa. However, Livingstone had misunderstood the native names when he christened the body of water, and actually mistakenly named the lake "Lake". The name Malawi, in contrast, had historical connotations—it was "derived from the pre-

[24] Kalinga, Owen JM, "The Production of History in Malawi in the 1960s," *African Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 389 (Oct., 1998), pp. 523-549, p. 528

colonial polity of Maravi, which at its height in the seventeenth century had extended between the present Eastern Zambia to the west and the Mozambique-Malawi border region in the east."[25] Adopting the word Malawi as the country's name actually was not a completely accurate reading of history—the ancient Maravi only covered a part of what became the British Nyasaland Protectorate. However, "the choice of the name Malawi was very much in keeping with Banda's own understanding of the history of the region. He always maintained that the present borders of Malawi are not a reflection of the historical situation of the area because the Maravi state was much bigger than the entity created by the British at the end of the nineteenth century."[26] Banda was preoccupied with proving that the "ancient Maravi state extended over most of modern Malawi, eastern Zambia and a significant section of modern Mozambique," a view that was expected to be integrated into the national curriculum.[27]

After Banda's election, Malawi experienced what is now known as the cabinet crisis of August 1964, during which the majority of the cabinet ministers who had helped elevate Banda to power fell from favour and were exiled, leaving the cabinet in control of increasingly sycophantic, ill-educated ministers. One effect of this was that free discussion of the recent political history of Malawi was outlawed. "One could not mention the names of Henry Chipembere or Kanyama Chiume, the young politicians who had been amongst the first African elected members of the colonial legislature under the new arrangements of the mid-1950s."[28] Both, now living in exile, were considered rebels and mentioning their names was paramount to treason. "Their role in the anti-colonial struggle was being deliberately obliterated from the

[25] *ibid.,* 529
[26] *ibid.*
[27] *ibid.*
[28] *ibid.*

memories of Malawians. During national festivities when the political history of the country was expressed and re-enacted on radio, in newspapers, at national and local party gatherings and in schools, a version of history was presented that was in keeping with the feelings of the post-1964 cabinet crisis Malawi Congress Party."[29]

Banda personally played a large role in the production of history in Malawi in the 1960s. In his speeches he would "make definitive statements on the pre-colonial history of Africa and Malawi. Teachers would take notes at such gatherings and would repeat his version of history in their classrooms; similarly, some college students would uncritically incorporate Banda's renditions in their essays. His favourite topic was the mfecane and during lectures on it he would recite Shaka's genealogy and remind his audience of the settlement of the Ndebele north of the Limpopo, and also of Zwangendaba's epic journey into modern Tanganyika and the final settling of his main party in the Malawi-Zambia area. Almost always he would talk about how his own people, the Chewa, were the only ones to defeat the Ngoni at a battle fought at Nguluyanabambe, near Kasungu, Banda's home district. He would then ask a senior party official of Ngoni origins, preferably a cabinet minister, to confirm and enact the battle of Kasungu. And whenever he was on a visit to the north of Malawi he would be met by Ngoni men dressed in traditional outfit, singing and chanting war songs praising him, the conqueror of colonialism."[30]

Although he was always quick to highlight his own ethnic background as a member of the Chewa tribe, Banda always emphasized the supremacy of national unity over ethnic affinities, a unity that he thought could be obtained by the observance of Malawian cultural traditions—hence the strict dress codes and censorship. Although Malawi is far from Turkmenistan, Banda and Niyazov's

[29] *ibid.*
[30] *ibid.*

regimes show striking similarities, as do their efforts in historical revision in an independent period. This chapter will outline some of the major themes of the new Turkmenistan official historiography and the parallels between the cases will become increasingly clear.

Niyazov's Nationalist Historiography

Niyazov's construction of a Turkmen nation in the post-Soviet period and his varied attempts to enhance national cohesion have included the development and propagation of a national narrative. A centrepiece of Niyazov's national narrative has been publications in his name that extend a new version of Turkmen history. The publication of *Ruhnama* in 2001 gave a new focus to Niyazov's nation-building efforts. *Ruhnama* provides a detailed, largely mythical, and very ambitious narrative history of the Turkmen nation. *Ruhnama*, while not intended to be a history book, is claimed to be the "only source that will connect Turkmen's present and their past... *Ruhnama* should place in the hands of Turkmens their unique and whole history, and spiritual striving."[31]

Niyazov's regime, in its historiography, is attempting to forward an agenda of national identity based on shared ancestry and myths of origin, historical homeland and territoriality, the celebration of ancient glories based on sometimes dubious ethnic distinctions, and presentation of an historical "other"-- while contemporary Turkmenistan is permanently neutral, Niyazov has defined historical colonialism and Soviet control, as well as tribal disunity, as aggressive historical assaults on the

[31] Saparmurat Niyazov, *Ruhnama* (Ashgabat, 2001), p. 22. In this chapter, I will refer to *Ruhnama* as Niyazov's book. This is done for simplicity's sake-- while *Ruhnama* does reflect Niyazov's national program, it was likely not authored by Niyazov himself. Rumors abound as to the true authorship, but the work was likely published by two historians and a journalist two years before its recall, reworking, and publication as Niyazov's *Ruhnama*-- there is a copy of the original version still located in Ashgabat's Karl Marx library, with alternate authors' names.

Turkmen nation. This chapter will discuss in detail features of each of these elements of his strategy-- national icons, territoriality and homeland, ancient statehood, and perspectives on colonialism. It considers myth and memory, along with national golden ages, national heroes and the myth of origins; territorial homeland and attachment to soil; the debate about the historical presence of Turkmen states throughout history, and a description of historical confederations of the Seljuk Empire. Also, it will consider the idea of "otherness" and the presentation in Turkmenistan of the Russian conquest, and the concept of national forgetting—that is, an amnesia that goes hand-in-hand with historical factual invention; here, the role of tribalism in the nationalist discourse will be described.

Subjectivity and Historical Bias: A Note on the Sources

Niyazov writes, "The history of the Turkmens is very glorious... But the history of Turkmens has been written as they wish by everybody except Turkmen historians."[32] Turkmen history, it is true, has rarely been treated in an unbiased way. Early accounts of Russian and British explorers in the region reflect the geopolitical tensions between the two nations over who was to dominate the Silk Routes in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries. Russian, and then Soviet histories in particular are blatant efforts at historical revision themselves, constructed in order to instil first, a sense of nationhood, and then also solidarity to the whole of the USSR.

Political agendas always play a role in the way that historical events are presented, and the history of the Turkmen people has been viewed through various lenses over time. The Turkmen, largely nomadic up until the Russian conquest in the late 19th century, spread their own history largely through oral tradition, folklore and

[32] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 56

epic. In the late 18th century several Turkmen literary figures became known, writing romanticized portrayals of various events in the history of the region, that serve today as sources and inspiration for national historiography in Turkmenistan. In the 19th century, accounts of travellers to the regions—often agents of the British or Russian empires-- largely form the impressions that we have today of the Turkmen lifestyle at that time.

After the Russian (and shortly thereafter, the Bolshevik) takeover in the region of Transoxiana, and the territorial delimitation that formed the Turkmen SSR in 1924, Soviet scholars began to produce large amounts of historiography detailing the place of the Turkmen nation in history, the lifestyles of the Turkmen in the past, and the effects of the Russian conquest on the Turkmen. It was at this time when the term "nation" came to be applied to Turkmenistan and a national history was superimposed for the first time on the collection of tribes. Also, the nation for the first time was attached to a territory—prior to the Soviet period, even during the Russian military administration, the territory of the Turkmen had no borders to speak of—its southern front, Ashgabat, and Merv were claimed by Persia and the northern region of Dashoguz lay within the Khanate of Khiva.

Turkmen history was taught during the Soviet period as a succession of dynasties that, though reactionary and feudal, had long identified themselves as Turkmen and as a national community. Soviet theories on history went through a number of phases-- adherence to themes such as bourgeois-nationalism, great-power chauvinism, pan-Islamism, Pan-Turkism, Pan-Iranianism, cosmopolitanism, nihilism, the single stream theory, and others at various points in time. Soviet treatment of the theme of Central Asian peoples' relations to Russia showed particular variation. In the 1930s the generally accepted theory, propounded by historian M.N. Pokrovskii (later

purged) was that the incorporation within the Russian Empire of the Caucasus and Central Asia was an absolute evil. The theme of imperialist expansion (*zavoyevaniye*, or conquest) was strongly stressed. After the 1930s, the Soviet regime imposed a ban on the so-called "Pokrovskii School" and encouraged a brighter interpretation of the Russian colonial past, with repercussions for the historiography of Central Asia. In 1937 Stalin and Shestakov formulated the doctrine of "Lesser Evil", which claimed that Russian colonial rule had more positive effects in the region than potential domination by the Turks, Iranians or Brits would have had.

The theme became one of voluntary incorporation (*dobrovol'nye prisoyedineniye*), and historians stressed the progressive economic and political effects of incorporation, calling the Russian conquest an historic turning point in the progress of the Central Asian people.[33] In 1951, a report concluded that

> The conquest of the Central Asian khanates by Russia, in spite of the cruelties of the colonial yoke imposed by Tsarism, had for the peoples of these khanates an objective and progressive significance. This significance has to be considered in the light of a comparison with the hard circumstances in which those people had lived previously; and also in the light of the lot which would have awaited them in the event of the establishment in Central Asia of British or German imperialism, or of their pan-Islamic elements.[34]

Under this new interpretation, the common historical fate of the Russians and the Central Asians became even clearer.

By 1954, when a conference on the history of Central Asia was held in Tashkent, the party line changed to an even more favourable view of the Russian colonial period. It is said by various authors to be "an historically progressive manifestation," "a deeply progressive manifestation," "of great progressive

[33] Editorial review of events in the historiography of Central Asia, untitled, *Central Asian Review* volume 1, no. 2, 1953, p. 3
[34] *ibid.*

significance," "undoubtedly of progressive significance," "of enormous progressive significance," and "of extraordinarily important objective-progressive significance."[35] This type of revision of historical doctrine at political conferences is, as Pierce writes, "not history but catechism."[36]

Centrality of Historiography to Niyazov's National Revival

In the post-Soviet period, nationalist historiography has formed a major part of Niyazov's new national ideology. The rewriting of history assumes the falsehood of previous portrayals of the Turkmen people and aims at discovering a historical truth that has, until now, been hidden. In *Ruhnama,* Niyazov strongly condemns the misrepresentations of the history of the Turkmen: "Between the 17th and 19th centuries, some states diffused wicked propaganda in pursuit of their own national interests. They falsely represented the nation of Turkmens as pillagers and merciless slaughterers, and described them as a wild community who kill each other, living in tents, an ignorant, uneducated and nomadic nation."[37] Previously written histories are seen as "political tricks" aimed at eroding the "legendary past of Turkmen people and their contribution to the history of the development of the world through many centuries, to justify their invasion of its land and to take the Turkmen nation captive."[38]

Under the pseudo-ideology of Niyazov's sultanistic regime, unity is stressed as a major element of the program of national revival—historiography is one way in which Niyazov promotes this element of the ideological program. As mentioned earlier, the regime has developed a policy of "national revival" instead of nation-

[35] R. A. Pierce, *Russian Central Asia 1867-1917: A Study in Colonial Rule* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1960), p. 4
[36] *ibid*.
[37] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 44
[38] *ibid*.

building, drawing on the "great history of the Turkmen nation" and making the periods of Russian and Soviet domination seem like just a small backward step in the continual glory of that nation. Akbarzadeh writes that "the official designation of *national revival,* to a large extent, is a euphemism for historical forgery; this is an attempt to create an image of great antiquity and hence to justify the future existence of the Turkmen national community. By tying its fate to that of the eternal Turkmen nation, the elite hopes to guarantee its own future. The Turkmen state… has no scruples in misrepresenting history to serve its interests and pave the way for its continued rule."[39]

Although Niyazov employs Soviet methods in revising and enforcing knowledge of the new Turkmen national history, the content of his history marks a major deviation from the Soviet treatment. In the post-Soviet period and as far back as perestroika, Turkmen historians reject the Russocentric view of the Turkmen past, including the concept of Russians as "older brothers" who aided in transmitting progress and civilization. However, the mere focus of Turkmen history today on the idea of the Turkmen *nation* could not have taken place without the Soviet influence, for it is the Soviets who first determined the bounds of the Turkmen nation. And this aspect, the legitimacy of dividing history into distinct national components, not only has not been rejected by Niyazov's regime, but forms the driving force behind it--nationhood is superimposed, in fact, on a past that was in many ways nation-less.

The consistent focus on the historical Turkmen nation as the topic of study is among the most striking elements of this narrative. Edgar writes, "A semi nomadic people at the time of the Bolshevik ascent to power in 1917, the Turkmen were fragmented into genealogically defined groups that spoke different dialects, were

[39] S. Akbarzadeh, "National Identity and Political Legitimacy in Turkmenistan," *Nationalities Papers* 27(2):271-290 (1999), p. 282

often at war with each other, and were ruled by at least five different states.... Although these Turkmen groups claimed common ancestry, they possessed no clearly bounded territory, no common political institutions, no uniform language, and no mass culture of print and education-- in short, none of the trappings of modern nationhood."[40] The superimposition of the modern idea of nation on a nation-less past creates an artificially strong continuity between the ancient past and today's state of Turkmenistan. As Segars has written of Kemalist Turkey, "how can one speak of the national revival…when the vast majority had never before exhibited a significant awareness of, or an affinity to, their nationality? Turkish national identity had not been lost at some point in the past, only to be revived during the nineteenth and 20th centuries; it had, quite simply, never existed, at least not for the majority of the population."[41]

This chapter will explore some of the component parts of the nationalist historiography in contemporary Turkmenistan—it is important, in this process, not to lose sight of the overall narrative and its significance. The history of the Turkmen nation is presented as age-old, firmly rooted in historical and territorial space, historically great, influential and expansive, and also as a state with a solid national character that is reflected in its selection of national heroes and in the way of life of its people. Golden ages of the Turkmen are emphasized, and taken to have occurred before the conquest by the Russians and the later Sovietization, and a return to glory is the call of the era of independence, with the 21st century dubbed the "Golden Century of Turkmen". Turkmen history is presented as a nation's long and glorious quest for independent statehood, a crusade led by mythical heroes, warriors and poets

[40] Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 1-2

[41] A. Segars, "Nation Building in Turkey and Uzbekistan: the use of language and history in the creation of national identity," in T. Everett Heath, *Central Asia: aspects of transition* (London and New York, Routledge, 2003), p. 80

and marred by divisive but temporary obstacles such as tribalism, external enemies, and colonial rule. The post-Soviet period, then, represents the fulfilling of the age-old dream of the Turkmen people for independence. It follows that Niyazov, the figure associated with independence, occupies a position of greatness within this conception of Turkmen national history, as the man who led his people into the new golden age. Niyazov writes, "Independence has changed the fate of the Turkmen nation completely and has brought it to the point of perfection."[42] Unity is underscored as a major part of the national character, and periods of disunity or external rule are ignored or forgotten.

Myth and Memory: Four Turkmen National Heroes

In burying its Soviet heritage and recasting its national past, Turkmenistan's current regime has elevated a set of national heroes from mythology and the pre-Russian period to serve as the icons of national revival. The creation or elevation of iconographic national heroes serves to buttress a program of nation building in several ways. These figures provide a focal point to a program of new national ideology and can be selected and presented in such a way as to legitimize almost any project of nation building undertaken by a leader of a newly independent state.

As a focal point for construction of a national ideology, national heroes can serve as the embodiment of different traits of the national character or certain features of a nation. The reverence of national heroes, who represent the nation itself, in many ways is shorthand for reverence of the nation-- or, of the state, if it is tied to the nation as is the Turkmenistani state. National heroes are invoked in everyday "banal" nationalism and also heralded at celebrations of nationhood, independence, and

[42] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 159

historical events.[43] They are celebrated through various media: by statues and memorials built to honour them, literature dedicated to them, the recounting of important events in their lives and the preservation of important places, by television programs, films, and books about them, and school classes focused on their lives and projects. National leaders might draw upon their experiences or lives in speeches and put forward policy programs in their honour or under their inspiration. Anthony Smith discusses the role of what he calls national "heroes and messiahs" as part of the nationalist discourse of statesmen. The selection of national heroes is part of the search for models of the nation's qualities of authenticity and rootedness; embodiments of the national character that are intertwined, historically and territorially, with the nation itself. National heroes are meant to serve as "our guides in the task of national regeneration."[44] These national figures are "also seen as 'authentic'—pure, true, pristine, originary—and as such rooted in the soil of the homeland. Their message is still relevant, they provide models of conduct, and their exploits are true *exempla virtutis*, worthy of emulation in each generation."[45]

Smith argues that it matters less who these heroes really are, and more what message they bring to the nationalist discourse. He writes, "irrespective of their pedigree, these heroes and heroines, geniuses, prophets, and messiahs embody the popular will, the virtues, and the true interests of the nation. Whether historical or legendary, they have been elevated by popular memory above everyday power politics and the struggles of history, because in some way they revealed the inner goodness of the nation, and epitomized its virtues and its hopes…. it is the fact of

[43] "Banal nationalism" is a term used by Michael Billig to describe the invocation of nationalism through everyday routines and objects in England and the U.S. Igor Cusak expanded this concept in considering the new nation-states in Africa and suggesting that they also experience a banal flagging of the nation. See I. Cusak, "Pots, pens and 'eating out the body': Cuisine and the gendering of African nations," *Nations and Nationalism* 9(2) 277-296 (2003), p. 279.
[44] Anthony D. Smith, *Chosen Peoples* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 40
[45] *ibid.,* 41

heroism and genius, and the presence of prophecy, that matter, rather than any particular heroes, geniuses, and prophets… Of importance is not this or that personage, but the virtues and qualities they embody and the message of hope they proclaim."[46]

Niyazov selects his heroes carefully and they help to emphasize a single thread running through his historical project-- promotion of and dreams of national unity, union of the tribes, and national independence, as well as ties to the historical homeland. His selection, therefore, notably overlooks the past several centuries of Turkmen history.[47] His agenda in selecting the national heroes is fourfold: First, the regime promotes certain historical figures to legitimate its rule, by connecting the president to the heroic historical figures either through supernatural powers, shared personality characteristics, quasi-religious communing with the dead[48] and shared goals and visions of the nation. As March writes, "Not only is it the rehabilitation of a national hero in the attempt to inspire national pride and invent a national history after a long period of colonization, but it is the deliberate elevation of values associated with a (single) strong leader, centralized statehood and political order achieved through the manipulation of an untouchable symbol."[49] His second objective is clear: to promote national unity amidst an unsettling climate of ongoing tribal divisions and rivalries. Thirdly, Niyazov harkens back to pre-Soviet and pre-Russian eras to deconstruct and de-legitimate the Soviet period and the period of Russian conquest and the ideas that were promoted during those periods. By avoiding the recent past and designating it as a dark period for the Turkmen, he goes back to the idea of

[46] *ibid.*, 41
[47] With the notable exceptions of his mother and father, discussed in the previous chapter with reference to the cult of parenthood.
[48] See, for example, *Ruhnama*, 97
[49] Andrew F. March, "The Use and Abuse of History: National Ideology as Transcendental Object in Islam Karimov's Ideology of National Independence," *Central Asian Survey* 21(4) 371-384 (2002), p. 376

ancient Turkmen glory, which he has more flexibility in presenting because it is outside of the historical memory for living Turkmen and there are few recorded sources of this history other than those provided by the regime. Finally, Niyazov propagates both a territorial idea of nationhood and a genealogical vision of nation-- the Turkmens are at once a people inhabiting a historical homeland, and a vast and widespread group relating back to the same tribe that has overtaken many regions of the world and founded many great historic states.

Drawing on the first volume of the president's text *Ruhnama,* this section demonstrates the treatment of heroes in the popular discourse. In *Ruhnama*, Niyazov points to two significant subsets of national mythical hero in defining the ancient Turkmen national past, state-builders and literary figures. This is likely a conscious choice, because Niyazov clearly considers himself both a state-builder and, with the publication of several books of poetry along with two volumes of spiritual guidance in *Ruhnama*, a literary figure as well-- he was awarded the distinction of National Laureate of the Turkmens. By exploring four of the historical figures that have been elevated to the status of national hero in Niyazov's Turkmenistan-- Oghuz Han, Gorogly, Gorkut Ata and Magtumguly, this chapter will trace some of the ways in which their officially propagated biographies demonstrate how Niyazov is using them to influence Turkmenistan's people.

In *Ruhnama*, Niyazov writes that the souls of his deceased parents see him as the inheritor of the four central Turkmen heroes and, by extension, connected to the Prophet Mohammed; they told him, "Allah selected the four heroes of the Turkmens-- Oghuz Han, Gorkut Ata, Gorogly and Magtumguly-- as the inheritors of the prophets. Today, Allah the Great has designated you as their inheritor. Son, devote your life to maintaining the unity of the Turkmen nation and to sustaining the golden life for

them."[50] The parliament building in Ashgabat displays a visual representation of this historical trajectory-- there are five portraits adorning the facade of the building, four of the great historical heroes, clustered around Niyazov's presidential portrait-- the implication being that Niyazov is the latest great hero of the Turkmen nation.

Oghuz Han

One of the most important aspects of nationhood for the Turkmen is a shared myth of ancestry. Many ethnies have a mythical progenitor and a connected myth of origin; indeed, this may be considered one of the defining aspects of a nation. This helps to anchor the nation, and any traits assigned to that ancestor can be taken as signs of how the nation's people should behave, or indications of a national character. Smith writes, "Myths of origins, whether of the genealogical or the territorial-political kind, are usually regarded by the members and by many analysts as key elements in the definition of ethnic communities. Not only have they often played a vital role in differentiating and separating particular ethnies from close neighbours and/or competitors; it is in such myths that ethnies locate their founding charter and raison d'etre."[51]

Oghuz Han is the mythical progenitor of the Turkmen.[52] Niyazov's rhetoric concerning Oghuz Han depicts him as the progenitor exclusively of Turkmen kind-- he writes "A new nation was born with Oghuz Han".[53] Today in Turkmenistan, the figure of Oghuz Han represents the Turkmen nation, the Turkmen homeland, and the union of all the Turkmen tribes. He represents also the antiquity of the Turkmen nation, which Niyazov insists traces back to BC 5000. Niyazov, in *Ruhnama*, writes

[50] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 148-49
[51] Smith, *Chosen People*, 173
[52] Actually, many of the Central Asia populations recognize Oghuz Han as their progenitor as well, but Turkmen official historiography claims him exclusively for the Turkmen.
[53] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 102

of the great Turkmen ancestor: "Our Ancestor Oghuz Han is the forefather of the Turkmen people, whom Turkmen people assume to be a prophet....Oghuz Han's name means sky and earth,"[54] and that the names of Oghuz Han's six sons—purportedly the leaders of the six original Turkmen tribes-- denote the six great things in the world. Oghuz Han, according to legend, had 24 grandchildren who were the fathers of the 24 clans of the Oghuz, who are now spread across the globe.

The myth of origin for the Turkmens is probably the single most important element of their national identity. Common origin was what defined a Turkmen from a non-Turkmen, in the consciousness of the Turkmen (if there was any sort of national consciousness at all) at the time of the Bolshevik delimitation in 1924. Edgar writes, "All those who called themselves Turkmen traced their ancestry back to a single individual, the mythical Turkic warrior Oghuz-khan. Individuals and groups who did not claim descent from Oghuz were not considered Turkmen, even if they lived among the Turkmen and spoke their language. Oghuz Han, then, "formed the ethnic core of myth and memory that some scholars argue is essential to the formation of a nation."[55]

Niyazov writes of Oghuz Han as an influential and great man: "His ideas and opinions were not limited to one country and land, but were so great as to contain all the earth. He was such a great man, whose opinions illuminated all the nations of the world"[56] and often refers simply to that era as the Golden Age; "the golden periods of our glorious history illuminate the world. Oghuz Han, armoured in pure gold and bearing his quiver on his legendary horse, waits at the beginning of this glorious history."[57] Oghuz Han's epoch, importantly, marks the first historical "golden age"

[54] *ibid.,* 42, 96
[55] Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 26
[56] Niyazov, *Ruhnama,* 103
[57] *ibid.,* 92

for the Turkmen. Niyazov now calls the 21st century the "Golden Century of the Turkmen", and great emphasis is placed on returning to the great national character from the time of Oghuz Han. A golden age in any national historiography is "a time of heroes, people whose thoughts and deeds can inspire admiration and hope amongst their enfeebled descendants, and whose virtuous example may show the ways to remedy contemporary decay. Heroes mirror the best of the community's traditions, its authentic voice in the moment of its first flowering, so sadly silent today."[58] Niyazov also states that "The golden age signifies many things, but, above all, it shines forth as a cultural model and an inspiration, because it is seen as extraordinary, canonical, and sacred. We are not dealing simply with the exploits of particular heroes or the teachings of lone sages, influential though they may be, but with a whole period (or periods) of the communal past characterized by a burst of collective activity—military and political, economic and social, artistic and intellectual, or religious—which represents the 'authentic' spirit of the community and its moral core."[59] During the golden age of Oghuz Han, the Turkmen nation is said to have implemented many things that have become essential to the modern world, including a national alphabet and the wheeled wagon. These inventions, Niyazov insists, were great contributions of the Turkmen people to world civilization. "Undoubtedly, the wagon has lent speed to history and to life. The design of our alphabet has changed throughout history; and today we see it in the form of the embroidery on Turkmen carpets."[60]

Oghuz Han not only gave birth, mythically, to the Turkmen nation, but also endowed it with the character that Niyazov suggests should be continued to this day. Niyazov writes, "The style of our nation's culture and life originates with Oghuz

[58] Nouzhanov, 9
[59] Smith, *Chosen People*, 171-172
[60] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 162

Han"[61], whom he calls the first spiritual leader of the Turkmens (in the first age of the Turkmen spirit, dating from BC 5000 to AD 600 according to *Ruhnama*). Oghuz Han is presented as a just and strong leader-- "The route led by Oghuz Han is one of justice, lawfulness and propriety, and its features are enthusiasm, courage, forbearance and endurance."[62] In addition, Oghuz Han is a major symbol of unity for the Turkmen nation. In legends about Oghuz Han, he is said to have warned against the dangers of divisiveness, and he is always portrayed holding a large bunch of arrows—according to legend, Oghuz Han easily broke an arrow against his leg, but demonstrated to his followers that it is impossible to break 24 arrows which are bound together.

In raising Oghuz Han to the level of national hero, Niyazov at once creates an icon, and also adds additional personal qualities to Oghuz Han, characteristics that are general enough to be easily transposed on today's Turkmen leader. The glorification of Oghuz Han by Niyazov, and the implicit and sometimes explicit connection of Oghuz to Niyazov, allows Niyazov to tie himself back to the very inception of the Turkmen nation, suggesting that he is the natural continuation of a line of great leadership that traces back to Oghuz Han.

Gorkut Ata

If Oghuz Han is seen as the forefather of the Turkmen nation, then Gorkut Ata (or Dede Korkut in Turkish) seems to fill the role of wise grandfather, or national prophet. Whereas Oghuz was the spiritual leader of the first era of Turkmens, Gorkut Ata was the spiritual leader of the second age, the age of Mohammed, when, under

[61] *ibid.*, 99
[62] *ibid.*, 289

Niyazov's account, the Turkmens first began conversion to Islam.[63]

Like Oghuz Han, he is a mythical figure--the character of Gorkut Ata appears in an old epic cycle of twelve pieces. He was a spiritual leader and is presented as among the first of his people to accept Islam, visiting Mecca and Medina on the *hajj*. This collection of prose is considered to be "the greatest folk product of the fourteenth century… the oldest surviving example of the Oghuz Turkmen epic."[64] The cycle recounts the struggles of the time between the Oghuz Turks and the Georgian and Abaza Circassians (in the Caucasus) as well as with certain Byzantine groups, incorporating stories of relationships and conflict within and between the Turkmen tribes. There is no real information conveyed about Gorkut Ata's personality, and there is mystery surrounding the authorship of the stories, and whether it was a single or multiple authors. Shaw writes, "the form and the style indicate that some single hand must have had a role, although whether simply collecting scattered stories or originating them is not yet clear."[65]

The epic was originally written in "a pure and simple Turkish",[66] and in any case is considered a major source for both the history and the literature of the time, displaying the basic music and style of the language "uncontaminated by foreign intrusions as few other Turkish works are."[67]

The lessons that Niyazov draws from the stories of Gorkut Ata are spirituality,

[63] Niyazov has divided Turkmen history into four eras in *Ruhnama*, notably ignoring the period from 1881 through 1991. Each of the four eras has a so-called "spiritual leader," the four national heroes that I am focusing on: Oghuz Han, Gorkut Ata, Gorogly, and Magtumguly. Oghuz Han leads the first age of Turkmen, from BC 5000 through AD 650. The second age of Turkmens is that in which Turkmen spread throughout the world, and the spiritual leader is Gorkut Ata. The third era, from the 900s until the 1600s, was the era of the sword, and also the time when the Turkmen spirit became known to the world– the spiritual leader was Gorogly, and the fourth age of the Turkmen spirit is between the 17th and 20th century, and Magtumguly represents that period.

[64] S. J. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 141

[65] *ibid*.

[66] *ibid*.

[67] *ibid*.

devotion to Islam, morality, and of course, national unity. The man is portrayed to have been a living person instead of an epic character, with Niyazov dating him and placing him territorially within the new historiography of Turkmenistan. In *Ruhnama*, Niyazov writes, "Gorkut Ata converted to Islam of his own volition and discovered the new comprehensive space unique to the Turkmen soul. Gorkut Ata established new morality that was inspired by his personal faith and philosophy of the afterlife."[68] Gorkut Ata is presented as a man of miracles, but also teaches lessons of humility:

> In the character of Dali Domrul, Gorkut Ata taught the next seventy-seven generations how arrogance brought calamity to man: Wealth and ease make Dali Domrul vain and arrogant and he starts to challenge passers-by to wrestle with him. Looking for an excuse to challenge people, he constructed a bridge over a dried-up riverbed. He collects a toll from those who pass over the bridge. He takes thirty toll-fees from people crossing the bridge and forty from people who do not want to cross over the bridge. Of course, he collects the toll unfairly by brute force. Dali Domrul becomes world famous. One day, he hears the noise of a quarrel coming from a village nearby. He goes to find out what is happening there. They said: 'Oh! Our Han, one of the heroes has died.' Delighted to think he has found a worthy opponent, Domrul asks: 'Who killed your hero?' 'Azrael with the red wings.' Then, his eyes blurred with malice, he searches for Azrael. But Azrael is supported by the divine power and never yields to earthly power. A clash between the two ends with Domrul begging for mercy. The way to save yourself from arrogance is to repent and ask for forgiveness.[69]

Gorogly

The spiritual leader of the third era of Turkmen history, Gorogly, is yet another mythical figure endowed with the characteristics and respect of an ancestor. A Gorogly (or Koroglu) character exists in the oral traditions of almost all the Central Asian societies. The Gorogly-type epic falls under the category of heroic-romantic feudal epics, poetic cycles generally known by the Persian term *dastan* that tell of the love of a hero and heroine destined for one another, though their story takes them

[68] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 290
[69] *ibid.,* 193

through adventures and challenges.

According to the scholar Lois Giffen, the Gorogly cycle is the latest in the line of the Turkic oral epic tradition, which was created from the beginning of the seventeenth century up until the first half of the nineteenth century. She suggests that the cycle gives a "vivid picture of class differences and social struggles in feudal society."[70] It was composed and disseminated quite rapidly, which she takes to demonstrate the vivacity of the oral epic at that time. Giffen affirms that this myth is indeed pan-Turkic and not exclusive to the Turkmens, something that other Central Asians are also quick to point out. She writes, "The Koroglu tales have spread in varying forms throughout the Caucasus-- in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, among the Kurds, in Turkey, and in northern Iran, as well as among the Turkmens, Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Karakalpaks, Tajiks, and others."[71] Gorogly may have been modelled on an existing person—some historical documentation suggests that a man who was given the name Raushan and called by the nickname Gorogly or Koroglu (son of the blind man) may have been a leader of the Jelali rebellion in Azerbaijan in the early 1580s.[72] The character was adapted to suit various minstrels' styles and regional traditions and circumstance, but generally took the role of a Robin Hood-esque noble bandit. This was an attractive character, Giffen points out, for "those under feudal oppression… this hero represented the dream of the redress of injustice and the triumph of courage."[73]

The stories of Gorogly's birth and life—or one version thereof—are ubiquitous in contemporary Turkmenistan, especially in children's books. Grandson of Jygalybeg, a man who had lost his son and daughter-in-law, Gorogly was the

[70] Lois Giffen, "Central Asian Societies and the Oral Literature of Epic Heroes," 73
[71] *ibid.*
[72] *ibid.*, 74
[73] *ibid.*, 74

product of a miraculous birth—Jygalybeg was informed by angels in a dream that the unborn grandchild lived despite his parents' deaths. The infant Gorogly, in fact, had crawled from a tomb and was being raised by local shepherds; he was named Rowdan but friends called him Gorogly, meaning "from the grave". Gorogly's fictional childhood presents interesting parallels for Niyazov—Gorogly, like Niyazov, is an orphaned character who rises to greatness. Niyazov draws connections between Gorogly's birth and his own personal life. "I have borne many difficulties throughout my life. I grew up feeling the absence of my father... A sudden and terrible earthquake destroyed our home and separated me from my brothers, who were like my eyes, and my mother, who was my guide in life….[74] Just as Gorogly came into the light of this world from the grave, I also came into this world from the ruins."[75] Niyazov was orphaned at a young age and in *Ruhnama* he describes in some detail his troubled childhood and how he overcame many obstacles. In tying his biography to that of Gorogly, Niyazov again elevates himself above the average man in his public portrayals.

A prominent trait of Gorogly that Niyazov uses as exemplar is his bravery. Gorogly's lesson for Turkmen is that "Today, bravery should underlie the foundations of work, life, thought, and awareness of Turkmens as a nation. Turkmens should cope with their difficulties and have self-respect. Then we will be able to find our place in the balance of the world."[76] Niyazov asks, "How can our nation not be brave and self-sacrificing, when all our books, epics and talks are related to the homeland and bravery?"[77]

[74] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 154
[75] *ibid.*
[76] *ibid.,* 171
[77] *ibid.,* 172

Magtumguly

Magtumguly, a revered 18th century national poet, is well known among the Turkmens and was elevated to the position of national hero before the era of Turkmenbashy, during the Soviet period-- marking a measure of continuity between pre-Soviet, Soviet, and post-Soviet Turkmen culture. Magtumguly is unique among the four Turkmen heroes in the documentation of his existence. Magtumguly is the most significant figure in the creation of Turkmen written literature, and was also the first poet in historical memory to write in the Turkmen language, significant given the literary use of Chagatay Turkish during that time. Feldman writes, "The Turkmen language was not employed for courtly literature until the beginning of the eighteenth century, at which time written literature appears to emerge quite suddenly among the Turkmens."[78] Widespread acceptance of Magtumguly's greatness among Central Asian people lends credence to Niyazov's claims and helps to buttress his program of nationalist historiography. As Feldman writes, Magtumguly "himself has become a figure of myth combining great antiquity with moral rectitude."[79]

Although little is known of Magtumguly's personal life, it is accepted that he was born around 1730 near the Atrak River north of the Iranian city Goran, and was a member of the Goklen tribe. Like his father Azadi (also a literary figure), he studied in the Khivan madrassa Shirghazi and was trained as a goldsmith. He fell in love with his cousin Mengli (writing many of his poems about her), but she was married to someone else-- his inability to marry her marked the greatest tragedy of his life. Eventually he married another woman and had two children, both of whom died young. Besides his love, Turkmen raids against the Iranians (and vice versa) figure largely in his poetry. Using two names-- Magtumguly and Piragi (Firagi), he authored

[78] Feldman, 169
[79] *ibid.*

some 800 poems. Magtumguly was twice taken into captivity with other Goklens to Persia, was witness to the ruinous invasion of his country by Nadir Shah, and died in a civil war between the Goklen and the Yomut around 1790.

Niyazov exalts Magtumguly not only as a literary figure, but also for his strong Turkmen nationalism, calls for unification of the Turkmen tribes, and for his moral righteousness. Magtumguly promoted national unity and the union of the tribes, especially against hostile neighbours. He sadly narrated the internal strife between the Turkmen tribes, and pleaded with them to "come together and form a state of their own, instead of leading a separate life, which put them in a weak position against their enemies...."[80] Magtumguly's specific references to Turkmen people indicate that in the 18th century, though Turkmen did not form a nation in the modern sense (and indeed struggled fiercely among themselves), there were seeds of ethnic consciousness among elements of the Turkmen, including a linguistic distinctiveness. At the time of Magtumguly, in fact, there was no unity among the Turkmen and they were in conflict, generally, with each other, resulting from their tribal migrations. Saray recounts that the migrations of the Tekkes in the 18th and early 19th centuries from Manghishlak to Balkhans and Kopet Dag in Ahal and then to Merv "had caused problems for the other Turkmen tribes. The Turkmens did not have an organized government, in the modern sense of the word, in their political lives as they were very disunited amongst themselves up until the late 1850s. They governed themselves under the leadership of their respective Chiefs (or Elders) according to the principles of their Tore, and led an independent life."[81]

We can see Magtumguly's nationalism clearly in his poem *Turkmening* (of the

[80] M. Saray, *The Turkmens in the Age of Imperialism: A Study of the Turkmen People and Their Incorporation into the Russian Empire* (Ankara, TTK, 1989), p. 45
[81] *ibid.*, 53

Turkmens):

Between the Jeyhun and the Khazar Sea
Over the desert blows the breeze of the Turkmen
Its rose-bud is the pupil of my black eye;
From the black mountain descends the river of the Turkmen

The Lord has exalted him and placed him under His protection
His camels, his flocks range over the desert
Flowers of many hues open on his green summer pastures
Drenched in the scent of basil is the desert of the Turkmen

He is the son of a hero-- a hero his father
Goroghli his brother, drunken his head;
Should they pursue him on mountain or plain,
The hunters cannot take him alive,
this panther's son of the Turkmen!

Hearts, breasts, and heads are at one
When he holds a gathering earth and mountains crumble,
When food is prepared at one table
Exalted is the destiny of the Turkmen!

The tribes are brothers, clans are good friends,
Fate does not oppose him, he is God's light,
When heroes mount their horses, facing the battle,
Toward the foe goes the road of the Turkmen!

This oft-cited poem contains virtually a national program for the Turkmens, opening with a clear spatial location of the Turkmen national territory and an idealized description of their environment.[82] In a later couplet Magtumguly takes a bardic tone as he praises the Turkmen warrior by outlining his heroic lineage and mentioning the epic hero Gorogly. The final quatrain presents the issue of segmented social structure and presents the solution—the unity of the tribes.

Niyazov presents Magtumguly as a dynamic figure whose lifelong dream, the unity of the Turkmen nation, is being realized now for the first time—in this way, Niyazov presents his leadership as the solution to the dilemma of Magtumguly's era. He writes, "Today, we have reached the unity, the integrity and the collaboration that

[82] Feldman, 183

our Father Magtumguly desired."[83] "Now this Turkmen tale has become a reality in the Turkmen territory. Remember that Magtumguly the Great made great endeavours to give unity and integrity to the Turkmens in the eighteenth century. No matter how he tried he could not make others heed his words because there was nobody able to lead the Turkmens. For the leader of one tribe to unite with another, one of the two leaders would have to accept second place, but there was no Han humble enough to bear to take second place….[84] Independent and Permanently Neutral Republic of Turkmenistan! With my whole heart, I desire your development and progress and devote my life to you…. Our ancestor, Magtumguly, keeping you in his dreams, wrote: *Know that what I built, Is the peg of this world. Forever it will stay independent, This is the edifice of the Turkmen*. It is we who have realized his dreams."[85]

Historical Homeland and Territoriality

One of the central elements of Niyazov's national program that manifests itself in the new national narrative is the concept of historical homeland. Contemporary nationalism is generally linked to territory and the concept of territoriality, which Jan Penrose defines as representing a "geographic strategy that connects society and space."[86] Territoriality is a primary, geographical expression of power. There are different ways of constructing territoriality. As Anssi Paasi argues, "boundaries may be simultaneously historical, natural, cultural, political, economic or symbolic phenomena and each of these dimensions may be exploited in diverging

[83] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 153
[84] *ibid.,* 169
[85] *ibid.,* 250
[86] Jan Penrose, "Nations, states and homelands: territory and territoriality in nationalist thought," *Nations and Nationalism* 8(3) (2002), p. 279

ways in the construction of territoriality."[87]

Territorial attachment is a common theme in nationalist discourse, but not an old one. Smith writes, "only in the modern world has this older collective attachment to the homeland come to serve as another sacred foundation and cultural resource for the maintenance, and reinterpretation, of national identities."[88] Benedict Anderson, for example, describes the role played by the creation of national censuses and map-making for the establishment of a modern concept of national territory and, indeed, of nationalism itself. There are two ways in which nationalists employ the concept of territory, argues Smith—these are the processes of the historicization of nature, and the naturalization of history.

In Turkmenistan, we see the historicization of nature. This is a term that "covers a number of processes by which land or terrain and its natural features become part of a community's history," writes Smith. The processes involved include:

> The interplay between a given land or terrain and the development of a particular community in terms of ecological support, resources, and security, and the attachment resulting from a successful relationship between them; The treatment of natural features of the land—rivers, mountains, fields, and the like—as intrinsic elements of the history and development of the community; The growth of a belief in the life-enhancing and nurturing qualities of particular landscapes for the community; and the growth of a collective attachment to, and sense of possession of, the land as belonging historically to 'us', as 'we' do to it. The land is seen as an intrinsic part of 'our' history, and a partner of our joys and travails.[89]

The historical nomadism of the Turkmens left them without a homeland in the sense of a modern nation-state (indeed, without a nation, in the sense of a modern

[87] Paasi, cited in Penrose, 280
[88] Smith, *Chosen People,* 131
[89] *ibid.*, 136

nation) until 1924 when the Bolsheviks carried out a national delimitation in Central Asia, effectively tying many of the nomads to the territory.[90] In order to secure the territorial delimitation, the Bolsheviks undertook the first territorialization campaign in Turkmenistan, paving the way for Niyazov's "homeland" rhetoric to resonate with today's Turkmens.

The Bolshevik planners, in delimiting the Turkmen union republic in 1924, were faced also with the (even bigger given its novelty) challenge of giving the nomadic Turkmen a feeling of connection with the land. Thus, Niyazov's territorialization is an example of continuity with the Soviet era. The "emphasis on the Turkmen *homeland* in the new state's nationalist ideology" stems back to the 1920s, when "the creation of a national territory under Soviet auspices had brought about a dramatic change in the attitudes of the historically nomadic Turkmen toward territory. Before the Soviet era, a well-known proverb maintained that a Turkmen's home was wherever his horse happened to stand."[91] Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, "Turkmen state officials and historians spared no effort to prove that the Turkmen had inhabited their current territory since time immemorial; some scholars even went so far as to deny the nomadic heritage of the Turkmen."[92]

Niyazov, in *Ruhnama*, stresses that Turkmens have long inhabited their territory. He traces the territory of the Turkmens back to the time of the mythical progenitor Oghuz Han, in the first era of the Turkmens. Through the figure of Oghuz Han, Niyazov introduces the idea of territorial historic homeland of the Turkmen: "These lands under the rule of Oghuz Han were known as the Oghuz Homeland. We have accurate information about this…. Ancient sources tell us that Oghuz Han's land

[90] Although the boundaries between Turkmenistan and Iran were not finally settled for years after the delimitation.
[91] Edgar, *Tribal Nation*, 264
[92] *ibid.*

stretched from Altyntepe through Anew, Anew, Nusay, Takgala, the entire Merw, Koneurgench and Caspian-Belh region, including Seyhun-Jeyhun (and) east to west up to the Idil Sea in the north."[93]

Penrose writes that one important aspect of the "emotional power of territory is the tendency for human beings to reinforce their connections with specific places through history, memory, and myth. This is crucial to maintaining the significance of boundaries to those sustained by the territory and, in consequence, to inspiring their commitment to the survival of this territory."[94] Niyazov's efforts at territoriality take the form of nationalist claims about historical events and civilizations that existed on the territory of contemporary Turkmenistan, regardless of whether these had connections to the Turkmen people at the time. Additionally, he extols the glories of the land, making an emotional call for attachment to the territory of Turkmenistan, describing it at once as the most attractive settlement in the world and the resting place of all the Turkmen ancestors.

Niyazov extols the greatness of the territory of Turkmenistan as though its borders were carefully selected by the Turkmen nation and its ancestors, rather than given by the Bolsheviks during the delimitation. He writes, "This sacred land with its mountains, fields, seas, deserts, and rivers is of God's grace and favour to our nation. If it was said, 'You are free. Travel around the globe and choose wherever you want as your homeland,' the sons of this nation could not find a more beautiful and beneficial land."[95] He presents the land as sacred and introduces a concept of spiritual attachment to territory. "If you go around the world, you may find mountains and forests that are a hundred times more beautiful than those of the Turkmens, like

[93] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 210-211
[94] Penrose, 280
[95] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 77

Paradise. However, those mountains cannot understand you and cannot share your sufferings. Outside this territory you cannot find deserts, seas and rains that can blow musical instruments and sing songs in Turkmen."[96]

Ruhnama makes the claim that historically, the great sultans of Turkmen origin, who founded states across the Middle East and South Asia, all returned to Turkmenistan-- the original homeland of the Turkmens-- to settle in the end. Niyazov claims that "Our ancestors conquered the most beautiful places in the world but they were not fascinated enough by the beauties of those places to settle there. If they had wanted to settle in the most beautiful places in the world, they could have done so because they were the Sultans of those places. Instead they returned to their own homeland, no matter where they had conquered and no matter what they had acquired from other places in the world."[97] This dubious claim is proven ill-researched later in the *Ruhnama*, when these different great sultans are profiled-- most of them died or were killed in the cities that were the capitals of their states or empires—few on the soil of today's Turkmenistan.

Penrose writes, "Every society has stories about its origins and its past. These stories reflect the uniqueness of the society and this distinctiveness is reinforced through the language of communication and through religious and/or historical allusions. Moreover, these stories always occur in space and are usually associated with specific sites and/or landscapes."[98] Niyazov discusses the natural element of Turkmen folklore in *Ruhnama*, arguing that the material, spiritual and cultural values of the Turkmen nation developed so that they are intertwined with the environment that they inhabit today. He writes, "Read Oghuznama, Gorkut Ata, or Gorogly and

[96] *ibid.,*163
[97] *ibid.,*178
[98] Penrose, 280

you see a harmony with nature; this harmony reminds you of the relations between father and son. Thus the Turkmen nation calls this country the 'homeland'. This kind of relationship gives the Turkmen spirit naturalness, health, spiritual loftiness, and beauty."[99] Interestingly, the story of Gorogly-- this is the story shared by many Turkic groups and even the Tajiks-- is set in a lush mountainous landscape-- a landscape more closely resembling southern Kazakhstan or Kyrgyzstan than Turkmenistan.

Archaeology and Civilizations on Turkmen Soil: The Parthians

The regime's claim to the histories of all of the civilizations that existed on the soil of Turkmenistan allows it to adopt achievements for the Turkmen people that are also claimed by other nations as their own, and also allows Niyazov to emphasize the age-old dimension of Turkmenistan and the Turkmen nation. Artefacts uncovered from ancient civilizations on Turkmen soil provide a better basis for nationalism than the non-existent historical Turkmen national consciousness. By connecting recorded ancient civilizations to the Turkmen people, Niyazov proceeds with a huge historical forgery. He writes, "Anyone who flies over Turkmenistan in a plane, from a birds-eye view, will see that a great number of cities were built in ancient times in all corners of the country."[100]

The territory of contemporary Turkmenistan, unquestionably, was home to many ancient civilizations, a source of great pride to Turkmens today. From southern Turkmenistan's Altyn-Depe civilization to Dekhistan in southwestern Turkmenistan, to the more famous Bronze Age agricultural settlement of Margush (Margiana) near Merv in the delta of the Murgab, Turkmenistan boasts great wealth in historical artefacts and history. The history, however, is largely not that of the people we today

[99] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 180
[100] *ibid.,* 172

call "Turkmen,"—this is where Niyazov's claims become interesting. *Ruhnama* insists that "When we say homeland our ancestors come to mind and when we say our ancestors our homeland comes to our mind."[101] The example of the Parthian state, which for a time had a capital at Nisa near today's Ashgabat, but was not a state of Turkmen people, makes clear the extension by Niyazov of historical fact to historical forgery.

Akbarzadeh argues, "The link between Parthians, Seljuks and modern Turkmens is far from certain."[102] In Turkmenistan, however, this link is presented as strong. While the question of Seljuk connection (a more conventional and substantiated connection) will be discussed later, the Parthian connection draws upon the idea of national homeland and is addressed here. An ethnic historical link with the Parthians-- claimed by the regime-- would call into question the Turkic origins of the Turkmen.

Akbarzadeh writes, "Studies of the Parthian civilization and implicit assumptions as to the link between the latter and modern Turkmen culture provide clear examples of the prevalent tendency to date Turkmen culture back to antiquity. By claiming this ancient civilization as its own, the nationalist elite fosters pride in the national community of Turkmens."[103] The links are not merely implicit. In *Ruhnama*, Niyazov claims, "Turkmens in history founded the great Parfiya State."[104] A contemporary Turkmenistan history book describes how, "In the first millennium BC in the south of modern Turkmenistan along the whole foothill stripe of Kopetdag mountains the powerful Parthian state was located. The residence of Parthian kings-- the Old Nisa-- was located near Ashgabat. Parthians *who were ancestors of Turkmens*

[101] *ibid.,* 244
[102] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity," 281
[103] *ibid.,* 280
[104] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 42

heavily defeated the powerful army of Roman Empire led by their commander-in-chief Cruss. In the west Parthia bordered with Girkaniya, in the east with Margiana situated in the Murgab's valley."[105]

The process of promoting links with the Parthians has drawn heavily on the contributions of state-sponsored historians and archaeologists. Newspapers in Turkmenistan often advertise proudly new archaeological findings at Nisa or at Margush. As Akbarzadeh writes, "State-sponsored archaeologists have been occupied with questions of Turkmen antiquity. Kh. Yusopov, a Turkmen archaeologist at the Turkmen Academy of Sciences, contributed regularly to the republican daily paper on this subject in 1994. In July and September 1994, he published a series of articles on the Parthian civilization in Nisa and the political and military exploits of the Khorezmshahid dynasty. Although Academician Yusopov did not draw a direct line joining Turkmen history and these ancient and middle civilizations in his articles, his archaeological writings fan the growing fascination with Turkmen history. Such 'scientific research' seems to strengthen the state's conspicuous nationalist policies. Other scholars do not have the subtleties of Yusopov. In July 1994 Albert Burkhanov, a candidate in history at the Turkmen Academy of Sciences, wrote about the importance of archaeological findings in Nisa for the revival of Turkmen identity."[106]

Perhaps the best known advocate of links between the Turkmens and ancient Parthians is historian Marat Durdyev, whose writings on Nisa and Parthia were published in the Turkmen press in 1995 in a series of articles on Parthian Nisa. Durdyev was promoted to deputy head of the National Administration for the Study, Protection and Restoration of Historical and Cultural Monuments of Turkmenistan--this put him in an influential position to push forward his views on links with the

[105] *Independent Neutral Turkmenistan,* 29 (emphasis added)
[106] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity", 280

Parthians. Akbarzadeh discusses the adoption of certain Parthian symbols by the regime to represent the Turkmen state today-- probably due to the influence of Durdyev. The ministries of education and foreign affairs are decorated with large rhytons, which were the symbol of Parthian civilization. Akbarzadeh concludes that this "idea of continuity between modern Turkmens and ancient Parthians, first publicized in 1991, must have appealed to the state in search of historical legitimacy."[107]

Golden Ages, Innovation, Turkmen Culture's Impact: Niyazov's View

Niyazov's program of national revival places huge emphasis on the ideas of ancient greatness and historical golden ages. By dating the origins of the Turkmen nation at 5000 years ago and blurring historical terms, Niyazov claims the achievements of great world civilizations for the Turkmen people. In *Ruhnama*, much attention is paid to inventions and the contributions of Turkmen to science and world development. Turkmenistan, after the attacks of Gengis Khan, was according to *Ruhnama,* "the most developed country in the world".[108] The Turkmen people devised some of the great inventions of human civilization, including the wheel and the first type of carriage,[109] tool- and sword- making using molten ores of iron and steel, silk cloth and silk carpets. Turkmen philosophers, scholars, and artists emigrated all through the Middle East and Turkey, passing on Turkmen civilization-- in this way, "the scientific achievement of the Turkmen nations became the ferment of European scientific advancement. The Turkmen wheel precipitated the scientific progress of the world."[110] Turkmenistan "became the home of scientists, scholars, intellectuals,

[107] *ibid*., 281
[108] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 55 (emphasis added)
[109] *ibid*.
[110] *ibid*., 61

philosophers, artists and poets."[111] "The Turkmen nation has traced marks as magnificent as those of Great Britain, of the Great Indian Nation and of the Great Chinese Nation."[112] The real history of Turkmen, Niyazov claims, is central to world developments. "Turkmenistan which has been the centre of many great transformations and a centre of development and progress, had a very special place in the history and expansion of Islam into the world. Turkmen people have made unlimited contributions to the world."[113] When a Turkmen person is noticed, observers exclaim, according to *Ruhnama*: "That man is Turkmen! They are the nation that directed the course of history."[114]

The Origins of the Term "Turkmen"

Niyazov's historiography draws freely from Turkish national history, claiming many of the same historical events and achievements as do Anatolian Turks. Niyazov writes, "When I read and examined the history books, I realized that the word 'Turkmen' has been replaced by the word 'Turk' for more than 50 years. In Ruhnama, however, I make the word 'Turkmen' regain its real meaning in order that today's Turkmens come to know their ancestors and become vigorous with their spirit."[115] By most accounts, Turkmen indeed share genealogical connections with the Turks who later came to populate parts of the Ottoman Empire; however, the Turks are not so quick to include the Turkmen in their historiography. What does the historical record (written by non-Turkmens) say about the question of Turkmen and Turkish origins and shared ancestry?

According to all historical records, the term Turk was introduced before the

[111] *ibid*., 55
[112] *ibid.,* 60
[113] *ibid*., 25
[114] *ibid*., 150
[115] *ibid.,* 210

term Turkmen, although the two seem to be closely related. The Turks appear first under that name in the sixth century AD, residing in the Altai Mountains on the west of the Mongolian steppes. According to Pitcher, their ancestry was obscure, and "orientalists are still disputing whether their immediate predecessors, the Hsiung-nu, were Turks, or Mongols, or proto-Turks, or the common ancestors of both Turks and Mongols."[116] These Turks, in Bosworth's account, were related to or descended from the Hsiung-nu in Chinese sources. The serious history of the Hsiung-nu goes back to the third century BC and they were definitely in close contact with Turkish-speaking people from the earliest period. They raided Europe in the fourth century AD with a horde of Huns that included some Turkish-speaking elements. After that, other waves of Turkish-speakers moved west from the Asiatic steppes, including the Bulgar and several Oghuz tribes (although in the language of the Bulgar there is a sound change from *z* to *r* so this group is recorded often as Ogur and distinguished from the Oghuz)….The position is greatly complicated by the fact that the Turku had played such an important political role during the sixth and seventh centuries that several peoples who were neither ethnically Turkish nor Turkish speakers called themselves, or were called by their neighbours, 'Turks'."[117]

The term Oghuz is first mentioned in the Orkhon inscriptions (the oldest known Turkish inscriptions), and the name is used "to refer to a tribal federation as well as to the ruling khans."[118] The Oghuz (the ancestors of today's Turkmen in most conventional versions) were distinguished from other Turks primarily by language. There was a later wave of Oghuz than the 'Ogur' of the fifth century; and owing to long contact with Iranian-speaking peoples and detachment from their Turkish-

[116] D. E. Pitcher, *An Historical Geography of the Ottoman Empire* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969), p. 22
[117] C. E. Bosworth, *The Medieval History of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (London: Variorum Reprints, 1977), p. 2, Al-xwarazmi 3
[118] Hostler, 7

speaking relatives further east, they had developed dialects sufficiently different from the standard Turkish of the Uygur of Sinkiang and the subjects of the Qarazanid dynasty to the north and west of the Uygur, for Mahmud al-Kasgari, writing in the middle of the 11th century, to make a clear distinction between 'the language of the Turks' and 'the language of the Oghuz and Qipchaq.'"[119] The Oghuz and the Qipchaq have both been described as Turkmen-- the origin of the designation is the subject of some historical controversy. Bosworth's volume suggests that, having regard to the fact that the people to whom it was applied were in close contact with Iranians, the simple explanation that it is 'Turk' with the Persian suffix -man ('like'), is probably correct. The designation Turkmen first appeared in the late tenth century, and was probably a term used by the non-Muslim Oghuz to refer to the Oghuz who had adopted Islam.

The Turks slowly migrated from Mongolia. Hostler writes, "In A.D. 745, the rule over Mongolia passed from the Oghuz to the Uygurs, while the Oghuz migrated west and south. These Oghuz migrations explained the formation of the present group of southwestern Turks, to which belong the Turkmen, the Azerbaijanis, and the Anatolian Turks."[120] In the eighth century, the confederation of the Oghuz migrated from Mongolia westwards toward the Aral Sea and the Syr Darya-- before this, stray elements had found their way into the upper Oxus lands and the Karakum and Dekhistan steppes-- this major migration from Mongolia, however, was what brought the Oghuz as a group to the attention of writers.[121]

Despite common origins, Turkic tribes began to differentiate themselves (and not only through migrations) as early as the tenth century. "In the early 11th century

[119] Bosworth 2, Al-xwarazmi 4
[120] C. W. Hostler, *The Turks of Central Asia* (Westport: Praeger, 1993), p. 7
[121] Bosworth 1, 211

there was a definite linguistic distinction between a south-western Turkish dialect, Turkmeni or Ghuzzi, and an eastern one, Turki.... Kashghari, whilst calling both the Oghuz and Qarluq 'Turkmens', carefully distinguished the speech of the two groups, and outlines some of the sound changes which distinguish the former from the latter."[122]

Turko-Persian Tradition and Turkmen Historiography

To a large extent, the content of Turkmen nationalist historiography—that is, in consideration of pre-Russian, "ancient" historical eras—is a continuation of Soviet national historiography. Turkmenistan's current concern with the origins and glories of the Seljuk dynasty is something that was first considered during the early Soviet years. Today it has become part of the presidential parlance and an integral source for the creation of national heroes and myth, as well as a central feature of *Ruhnama*. *Ruhnama* and presidential issuances also are greatly concerned with the connection between Turkmens today and the older Turko-Persian dynasties from Middle Asia—the Akgoyunlys and Garagoyunlys, and in particular the Safavids. These eras and personalities within them, then, also figure prominently in post-Soviet historiography—however, these were not so popularized during the Soviet period. Though they were discussed, it was at the level of elite academic specialization, and not in the purview of a typical student or citizen.[123]

Post-Soviet Turkmen historiography, which falls completely under the control of the presidential administration (the Academy of Sciences was closed in the mid-1990s) takes topics of Soviet interest and embellishes them, pushing them to the forefront of the national consciousness, and skimming over disagreeable details. The

[122] *ibid*., 214
[123] Viktor Fourniau lecture, Central European University, 8 July 2005

purpose is to root the Turkmen state in great antiquity and establish a line of continuity between great states and leaders of the past and today's Turkmenistan and its leader, Niyazov. *Ruhnama* opens with a discussion of the age of the Turkmen state: "The Turkmen people whose history goes back 5000 years[124] to the period of Oghuz Han, contributed to the universal values…. The Turkmen people has a great history which goes back to the Prophet Noah."[125] While the idea of the 5000-year history of the Turkmens might be the subject of controversy in Western historiography (the term "Turkmen" being found only as far back as the tenth century), Niyazov offers "proof" that the Turkmen nation is at least 5000 years old: "There was white wheat five thousand years ago... The same must be said of the Turkmen horse of Ahal Tekke, the Turkmen *iti* (dog), the carpet and other artefacts. From all this there arises the inevitable conclusion that these values are precisely the proof, clear to the naked eye, that the Turkmen nation is a nation with a history of five thousand years. So this is not a frivolous, vain, fabricated idea."[126]

"Turkmen" States in History

These inventions and great discoveries that Niyazov has claimed for the Turkmen nation are not generally taken (by other historians and historiographies) to be, in fact, so closely related to the contemporary Turkmen people. Niyazov's attempts to capture these glorious histories for the Turkmen work for him because of the isolation of his people, and also the way in which he frames the concept of historical time—by pinning the origin of the Turkmen people thousands of years back, and acknowledging the relationships genealogically between Turkmens and

[124] Or approximately 7000 years, depending on which chapter of *Ruhnama* is consulted—discrepancies like this underscore the idea that the book indeed has multiple ghostwriters or is perhaps a mutation of an earlier history book whose author was denied the rights to publish.
[125] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 9
[126] *ibid*., 67

Anatolian Turks, and other Turkic groups throughout Central Asia and the Middle East, he lends a greater level of credence to his claims. By attaching the origin of the Turkmen state to the same progenitor claimed by, for example, Turks and Uzbeks, Niyazov is able to usurp the nationalist historiographies of these nations and to call them his own.

A central piece of Niyazov's program of nationalist historiography is the description of states formed in the Middle Ages that were founded by ancestors of today's Turkmen. By presenting these historical states, Niyazov is providing a basis for a revival-- without historical greatness, the Turkmen nation today would truly be an invented nation. While *Ruhnama*'s history is not entirely fabricated, it exaggerates and picks over historical record to better fit the nationalist program. While in the modern times, the Turkmen tribes had no particular overall political cohesion, they did historically have genealogical connections to the founders of the Seljuk Empire and arguably also the Ottoman Empire before they split off from the sedenterised groups.[127] By the 16th century, however, the tribes that we call Turkmen today had been partially subjugated by Khiva and Bukhara as well as the Persians.

Before finally settling in the territory of today's Turkmenistan, the regime argues, the Turkmen nation founded more than seventy great states, principalities and sultanates across the globe.[128] While the regime for the most part adheres to a conventional version of history, tracing the lineage of today's Turkmen back to the confederation of Oghuz Turks, the regime's adaptation introduces the idea of a Turkmen nation into the historical arena, a concept that certainly cannot be said to have existed at the time. Niyazov not only refers to all of these past states as creations of the Turkmen nation, but he attaches the word "Turkmen" to almost any historical

[127] Hostler, 56
[128] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 77

figure, state, or territory-- creating the appearance almost of a textbook taken from another country and revised (simply by adding the word "Turkmen" in front of everything). Additionally, there are many instances of factual error in *Ruhnama*'s historical narrative.[129] While many of the states that Niyazov claims are historically Turkmen do indeed have shared ancestry with today's Turkmens, the role of the Turkmen people in the creation or governance of some of these states may not have been as extensive as suggested by the regime.

The Seljuks and the Turkic Origin of the Turkmen

The regime's historiography links contemporary Turkmen with Oghuz tribes, and especially highlights the Seljuk dynasty and its achievements as the epitome of Oghuz Turkmen state building. Akbarzadeh writes, "'Uncovering' Seljuk traditions and legacies that are thought to be the legitimate inheritance of the present Turkmen nation-state is officially sanctioned by President Niyazov. In his 1992 speech, Niyazov gave his state a thousand-year history by defining the present Turkmen state as a 'Seljuk state.' The Seljuk period has become the most favoured area of historical research by the state, due to its obvious political utility and potential for nation building."[130]

In the post-Soviet period, not only do the Seljuks feature in presidential speeches and writings, but statues and memorials to heroes of the Seljuk period dot Ashgabat's parks, a month has been named for the Seljuk leader Alp Arslan, and the

[129] These states and empires are claimed also by other nations, from the Turks to the Tajiks to the Iranians. As Paul Gilbert has written, "The most important role for history is to help individuate nations," and this of course is less effective when events and territories are claimed by multiple national entities. This creates a dilemma of historiography-- who were the true founders of these ancient states, and who were the citizens? What types of culture did they promote and which languages did they use? All of these questions fall on the backdrop of a period in time that predated the idea of the nation-- making these contemporary distinctions even more difficult and less realistic. Because Niyazov insists on this ethnic version of nationalism (in addition to, as we have seen, a concept of territorial nationalism), his claims about the lineage of the Turkmens must come under scrutiny.
[130] Akbarzadeh, "National Identity", 281

Seljuk symbol of the two-headed eagle has been modified to inspire the five-headed eagle of the Presidential flag. The regime employs heroes from the Seljuk period to demonstrate the national character of the Turkmen people. Heroes such as the sultans Togrul and Chagri Beg, Malik Shah and Alp Arslan are glorified, and Merv (the seat of Sultan Sanjar, relative of Alp Arslan) is held up as an example of a Turkmen territory playing host to a very significant historical empire—here again, national and territorial elements are fused.

While the Seljuks do have historical connections to today's Turkmen as well as to the territory of contemporary Turkmenistan, the regime's version of Seljuk history does not accurately reflect the connections between modern Turkmen and Seljuks, nor does it present the dynamics within the historical Seljuk Empire factually—by presenting the Seljuks not only as indisputably Turkmen through-and-through, and also as internally peaceful and virtually indestructible, the regime uses the Seljuk period as a "Golden Age". The Seljuk period is used to advance claims of Turkmen national unity and cooperation, although all historical records point to flaws in this representation of the Seljuks. The earliest source of historiography on the Seljuks is the anonymous *Maliknama*, which was probably written for one of the young Seljuk princes, Alp Arslan, shortly after the death of his father in 1059—it dates, therefore, from the generation of the events which it describes. Other sources, together with this, produce a critical account of the Seljuk dynasty, although some elements of the Seljuk experience remain historical speculation.[131]

The Seljuks, a section of the Oghuz tribal union, descended from the Oghuz tribe Qiniq. They seem to have been little more than one family of this tribe, although they gradually attracted many followers. Seljuk (the founder of the dynasty) was the

[131] Bosworth 1, 219

son of Dukuk, who was, according to legend, a Khazar army trooper who attracted the notice of the Khazar khan—Seljuk was raised under the khan's powerful protection, but in adulthood left to rejoin his kinsmen on the steppes. He and his followers migrated southward to the northern border of Transoxiana, where they came into contact with the Arab-Persian influence, gave up their shamanist beliefs and adopted Islam.[132]

After the fall of the Samanids, the Seljuks moved southward again, to the area of Bukhara and Samarkand in Transoxiana's core. This brought them into the storm centre of the struggle between the Ghaznavids and the Karakhanids for eastern Iran. They eventually accepted the power of Mahmud of Ghazna, in a thinly veiled attempt to overthrow him, but then he died, and in 1040 the Seljuks defeated the Ghaznavids in an historic battle at Dandarkan near Merv. By the time the emperor Togrul died, the Seljuks stood at the Byzantine borders of Asia Minor.[133] According to Saray, from this point the land around the Syr Darya (their original base) became much less important to them as they migrated. Only after 1065 did the Seljuk sultan Alp Arslan re-appear in that territory.[134]

While the Seljuks indisputably had great power and many military achievements, their relationship to the Turkmen tribes and nomads who were their vassals is more debatable. Niyazov's regime presents the Seljuk rulers as Turkmen and their followers as Turkmen nomads, and presents the relationship as a very cooperative one, based on kinship and respect. This may not have been the case historically. Were the Seljuk elite still leaders of nomadic Turkmen, or were they now

[132] Here, actually, the historical record is unclear—Bosworth writes, "In any event, it is far from certain that all the Turkmens who followed the Seljuk leaders southwards into Transoxania and Khurasan were Muslims, and perhaps only a minority were..." (Bosworth 1, 221)
[133] S. Legg, *The Barbarians of Asia* (New York: Dorset Press, 1970), p. 191
[134] Saray, 17. Compare with *Ruhnama*, where it is implied that all of the Seljuk sultans favored the territory of today's Turkmenistan as a homeland.

rulers and protectors of the civilizations they had conquered? What was the nature of the relationship between the Seljuks and the Turkmen nomads?

Shaw writes of "conflicts between the Seljuk rulers and their nomadic commanders and followers, who were dissatisfied with the restrictions imposed on them to save the settled populations of the area."[135] The Seljuk leader, as sultan, assumed most of the caliph's authority to legislate and rule in matters concerning administrative, military, and secular questions not directly regulated in the Muslim law. As temporal rulers of the Islamic state the Seljuks took over, restored, and elaborated the traditional Persio-Islamic administrative apparatus developed in late Abbasid times, relying largely on Persian ministers who emphasized their own culture, reviving the Persian language and largely eliminating Arabic in government and culture alike, using Persians in most of the administrative positions of the empire, even those in areas inhabited mainly by Arabs."[136] In short, the Seljuks became separated from the Turkmens—and at times, quite hostile to them.

Shaw suggests that one of the major questions for the Seljuk elite was "What was to be done with the Turkmen nomads who were driving out the settled populations of eastern Iran and Azerbaijan to the northwest and establishing their own pastoral economy?"[137] As the Seljuks conquered territories throughout the Middle East, in present day Iran and Iraq, they were confronted with the problem of consolidating their rule and restoring order and prosperity in the Middle East while providing their nomadic vassals with the booty and grazing lands they demanded. As long as the nomads formed the main element of the Seljuk army, their demands for booty and fodder could not be entirely ignored. But controlling them was very

[135] Shaw, 4
[136] *ibid*., 4-5
[137] *ibid*., 5

difficult.

The Seljuk sultans instituted "a new regular salaried army of mamluk slaves brought from the highlands of the Caucasus and of prisoners taken in the conquests. Once the new army gave the Seljuks a sufficient military alternative to the Turkmens, they solved the remainder of their problem by using it to drive the Tukomans out of Iran and Iraq into the territories of their enemies."[138] Under the Seljuk Dynasty, Turks and Oghuz filled many different roles, and often did not make up the bulk of the region's population. Bregel discusses the role of Turks as slaves (*ghulums*) under the Ghaznavid and Seljuks. They were brought to sedentary regions as individuals and could later marry locals.[139] With the new army and bureaucracy organized and financed, Turkmens were pushed out of the settled areas of Iran and Iraq as rapidly as possible. Although the Seljuks hoped to push the Turkmen nomads against the Fatimids in Egypt, the Turkmen preferred to move north and west. The plateaus of Iran and Iraq running into the highlands of eastern Anatolia seem to have been far more convenient conduits to pastures than were the mountains of southwestern Iran and the deserts of Syria and Sinai. In addition, the Byzantine and Armenian states in Anatolia "appeared to be much weaker and offered the prospect of much more booty than did that of the Fatimids. The Seljuks opposed the Turkmen pushes into Anatolia and they made little effort to follow up the early Turkmen onslaughts with formal occupation. Eventually, however, the momentum of the Turkmens carried the Seljuks along."[140]

The decline of the Seljuk Empire presents another example of historical record contradicting Turkmen regime historiography. Niyazov asserts that the Turkmen did

[138] *ibid.*, 5
[139] Bregel, cited in Canfield
[140] Shaw, 6

not bring down the Seljuk state, and that the state fell at the hands of the Mongols. He writes, "Through all this, the Seljuks did not war with their relatives, the Turkmens."[141] This does not seem to have been the case, and there are many histories of the Seljuks which portray the relationship between the Seljuk elite and the Turkmen nomads as the factor that brought down the Seljuks. WP and Zelda Coates write, "the final blow against them was dealt by the nomad Turkmenians who were subject to the Seljuks."[142]

The Seljuks finally ended their wanderings in Persia. After the deaths of important leaders in 1092, anarchy and dissolution loomed. Sultan Sanjar, the Seljuks' leader, came into some conflict with the Turkmen population of Balkh. Unable to repulse them from the territory, he allows them to settle there binds them to good behaviour and collects a large annual tax from them. In 1153, the Turkmen nomads broke out in rebellion, and in response to the taxation, murdered the tax agent and chased away a punitive expedition. Sanjar, in response, took the field against the Turkmen himself, and there was a catastrophic outcome--- the nomads routed his force, seized Sanjar himself and dashed for his headquarters at Merv. At the sight of Merv's luxurious palaces and dwellings, the Turkmen looted the city, torturing the citizens and robbing them of all their possessions, and also captured Sanjar, imprisoning him for four years (at which point he escaped and died). The Turkmen then marched further into Iran.[143]

Bosworth writes, "Even after the Seljuk Sultans had become rulers of a mighty empire in the Middle East, they never succeeded in exacting full obedience from their own Turkmen followers, and the debacle of Sanjar and the Ghuzz in Khurasan

[141] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 221
[142] W. P. and Zelda K. Coates, *Soviets in Central Asia* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd., 1951), p. 28
[143] Legg, 221

signalized the final failure of the Seljuq family to secure recognition amongst their people for their supreme authority."[144] Niyazov contends, however, "The Seljuk Sultanate fell in Sultan Sanjar's period…. Sultan Sanjar refrained from warring with the Turkmens who were his relatives, though."[145] In the end, "this great state could not resist the invasion of Jengiz Han and collapsed."[146]

The Historical "Other" and National Forgetting: Accounts of Goktepe

Nationalist historiography proceeds not only from the recasting and redefining of what a nation *is*, but also from the clear statement or indication of what it is *not*. By charting a historical course of independent and unified history for the Turkmen people, Niyazov's regime is certainly making claims contrary to other historiographies of these people and this region. In his calls for national unity, Niyazov underscores the threats of tribalism and internal divisions, and presents all historical events as experiences of unified Turkmen tribes—for example, the fight against the Tsarist conquerors in the 19th century. Also notable is his denial of the period of Soviet rule and particularly the role of the Turkmen in the carrying out of the Soviet domination. These are examples of a trend that we may call "historical amnesia," or a national forgetting.[147] Contemporary Turkmen historiography notably glosses over the period from 1882 until 1991, with the exception of World War II.[148] Prominent in the new history is the reinterpretation of the Russian conquest of Turkmenistan, which was undertaken largely after the 1881 battle at the fortress of Goktepe, east of Ashgabat.

The Soviet perspective on Goktepe changed along with its perspective on the

[144] Bosworth 1, 218
[145] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 222
[146] *ibid*., 223
[147] I am indebted to Touraj Atabaki for the suggestion of this term.
[148] See, for example, S. M. Demidov, *Postsovetskii Turkmenistan* (Moscow: Natalis, 2002), p. 147

nature of the Russian conquest that, as I have mentioned, underwent several revisions in the Soviet period. By the 1980s, however, the union of the Central Asian populations with Russia was taken to have been a progressive and positive step towards socialism. Many Soviet-era histories of Turkmenistan failed entirely to mention the battle at Goktepe—one textbook, for example, only records, "In the 1880s Turkmenia became part of the Russian Empire. The unification of Turkmenia with Russia had great progressive consequences for the Turkmen people. Imperialist states, eager to lay their hands on Turkmen oil, were prevented from turning the country into a colony of theirs. It also put an end to the destructive raids of foreign invaders and to internecine wars. It abolished slavery and slave trading and economically linked this feudal country to the advanced capitalist economy of Russia. The building of towns, workshops, factories and railways gave birth to the working class of Turkmenia, which established close ties with the Russian workers. The most important aspect of unification was that it brought the Turkmen people into the mainstream of Russia's economic, political and cultural life. The Turkmen people were drawn into the revolutionary struggle which the Russian working class was waging against tsarist autocracy."[149] A 1950s-era history recounts: "The Turkmen's life companions were want, uncertainty in what the morrow would bring, the eternal spectre of a dearth of fodder for the livestock and death from starvation for the family, and the expectation of ill-treatment at the hands of the rich and the nobility. Turkmenia's unification with Russia was a progressive, historic step which influenced the further destiny of the Turkmen people."[150] In a fourth grade Soviet textbook for students in Turkmenistan published in the late 1980s, again no mention is made of Goktepe of any forcible struggle in the Russian conquest of Turkmen territory.

[149] R. Esenov, *Turkmenia* (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1982), p. 16
[150] P. Skosyrev, *Soviet Turkmenistan* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1956), p. 18

The January 1881 clash at Goktepe had roots in an encounter at the same fortress two years earlier, in 1879. Charged with leading a Russian detachment against the Ahal Tekke Turkmen, General Lomakin marched on Goktepe in September 1879. The entire population of the Ahal Tekke had taken refuge in the hillside fortress of Denghil-Tepe in the area of the settlement Goktepe, about 20,000 in all including women and children. Lomakin led his 3,500 troops in a bombardment of the fortress, which wrought huge losses on the Turkmen, however, after the taking of the outer defence works he ordered an infantry advance. This ground assault provided the Turkmen fighters (armed only with hand weapons) with their only opportunity to inflict casualties and because of their numbers, they prevailed, and Russians lost over 3,000 men, their largest loss of life to that time in Central Asia. Eventually, the Russians retreated and Lomakin was relieved of his command.

Embarrassed by defeat, the Russian government planned a new expedition; in May 1880 preparations were given to General Skobelev, just back from a glorious role in the Russo-Turkish war. Numbering 7,100, the Russians reached the Ahal Tekke oasis in late November 1880, and the Turkmens once again clustered their entire population in the fortress of Denghil-Tepe. Skobelev's troops surrounded the fortress and began the siege.

The Turkmen were poorly armed in comparison with the well-prepared Russian troops; of the approximately 20,000 defenders, only 8,000 were armed with firearms and the others had only pikes and swords. As before, their only hope lay in hand-to-hand combat, but Skobelev was careful not to repeat Lomakin's mistake. The Russians tunnelled into the fortress' walls and placed mines. On 12 January 1881, after preparations were complete, the Russians breached a section of the wall, set off the mines and stormed the fortress. The blast reportedly demoralized the defenders,

many of whom fled from the advancing Russian troops. At Skobelev's orders, the Russians pursued them for up to eleven miles, killing them to the last including women and children. Reportedly, 8,000 were killed in this way. Inside the fortress, 6,500 corpses were found and thousands of survivors, mostly women and children.[151] The Russians reportedly killed all of the surviving Turkmen males, sparing about 5,000 women and children, and freeing 600 Persian slaves (identified later by the fetters on their legs). "Skobelev's political deliberation was that enduring peace could only be established if the Tekke was hit as hard as possible and as long as complete submission was reached."[152] During the fighting, the Russians lost 59 and had 254 wounded, though they lost hundreds more to illness over the next months.

The battle by all accounts broke the Turkmen resistance and decided the fate of Transcaspia. The fall of Goktepe was a

> traumatic experience for Tekke tribesmen, which also influenced the relations of other tribal confederacies to tsarist rule. Due to their military inferiority, Turkmen survival became possible only through submission to tsarist authority. Turkmen who escaped from Goktepe and who worried about the fate of the women and children left behind had no other choice than to accept Skobelev's call to return and to submit to tsarist authority. This was not an easy decision. Makhtum Kuli Khan expressed this deep Turkmen aversion to authority after he had involuntarily offered his submission in September 1882: 'I am driven to offer my submission to the Russian government in spite of every desire to the contrary on my part. I find no other course open to me.' It has been noted that Turkmen tribesmen became relatively obedient to Russian authority.[153]

The Turkmen, wholly beaten, were forced to submit, and Arminius Vambery, the Hungarian recorder of Central Asian affairs, wrote of the defeat of the Tekke Turkmen: "The returning Akhal-Tekke Turkmens presented the most pitiful aspect of

[151] Pierce, 41
[152] Geiss, *Tsarist,* 196
[153] *ibid*., 197

dreary desolation and bewilderment; the greater portion of their property was lost and scattered; more than half their cattle had perished in the desert. The haggard-looking and terror-stricken nomads, happy to save the last resources of existence, were certainly the best material out of which the first nucleus of Russian peaceful subjects in the desert could be formed."[154] In the slaughter at Goktepe, according to Vambery, "Russia had almost entirely broken the strength and power of the hitherto mostly dreaded nomads of Central Asia."[155] On 18 January 1881, a force led by Colonel A.N. Kuropatkin occupied Ashgabat and then Kaakhka and other settlements. From that point, Russian hold was firm in the region and on 6 May 1881, Transcaspia was declared an oblast. After the fall of Goktepe, leaders of the Turkmen tribes turned in vain to the British for protection against Russia, but their requests were met with silence. In January 1884, the Tekkes in Merv submitted voluntarily to Russian rule.[156] Finally, in 1885 the Tejen oasis—which had been under Afghan rule for a short period of time—was also annexed by Russia, marking the completed conquest of the Turkmen territories.

One of the most important facets of the historical record is the question of Turkmen tribal unity at the time of the Russian conquest. Soviet historians portrayed the Turkmen at the time of the Goktepe battles as self-destructive and stricken by civil war and internecine strife, whereas Niyazov presents the battle as one of the unified Turkmen nation against the vicious and unwelcome colonizers. The reality seems to have existed in the space between these two accounts.

The major tribal division at that time was the rivalry between the Tekke Turkmen and the Yomuts. During the 19th century there was a little progress in

[154] Vambery, quoted in Coates, 50
[155] *ibid.*, 48
[156] Pierce, 42

unifying the Turkmen tribes when Nur Verdi Khan, a leader of the Tekke tribe, managed to unite the Tekke with the Saryk and Salor tribes against the Persians—Saryk and Salor were tribes that had been hostile to the Tekke since the Tekke migration to the Merv area, which pushed the Saryks and Salors south. This union allowed the Turkmen to score victories in the 1850s and 1860s against the Persians and Khivans, and to enjoy something of a free life, establishing friendly relations with certain neighbouring countries for the first time. However, the division remained with the Yomuts, a rivalry that was exploited by the Russians in their conquest and which worked against the Turkmen. The Yomuts had failed to join the union between the Turkmen tribes and were continually pressured by the Persians due to their hostility to the other Turkmens and also their internal divisions. Eventually, after years of fierce warring, the Yomuts accepted Persian control in the 1860s for several years.

When the Russians first occupied parts of Turkmen territory and established a base on the Caspian at Krasnovodsk, the reaction of the Turkmen tribes was not uniform. The Tekke Turkmen were opposed to the settlement and quite hostile to the Russians—although they lived inland, the Tekke opposed any Russian advancement towards their territory. However, the Yomut Turkmens, who continued to feud with the Tekkes, Salors, and Saryks, were divided internally as to their response to the Russian advances. The Jafarbai branch of the Yomuts, who were primarily engaged in fishing around the Caspian, had no objection to the Russian settlement, hoping that it would increase their trade. The Atabai Yomuts, mostly a nomadic group, were opposed to the Russian occupation, but were unable to put up any real resistance because their tribal elders had been bribed by the Russians with money and gifts, and persuaded by Russian propaganda, which assured the elders that there was no intention of permanent Russian settlement, but that the move was only intended to

promote trade.[157] In the 1880s, the Yomut elders issued the following statement recounting their persuasion by the Russians:

> Some ten years ago, the Russians landed a force at Krasnovodsk. They told the Turkmens that they came as preceders; that their object was to build a road to Herat and Afghanistan in order to promote their trade; that if the Yomuts would assist them, they would be amply rewarded and that everything that was taken in the way of food and camels should be well and punctually paid for; and that the inhabitants of the country which they passed through would remain calmly independent, and no interference whatever should take place in their affairs. The Yomuts soon discovered that they had been deceived. The object of the Russians became plain. Their design was to compel not only the Yomuts, but all the other tribes to submit to their rule. The Yomuts found this out when it was too late to offer any resistance.[158]

Eventually, the Atabai Yomuts approached the Tekke tribal leader Nur Verdi Khan to aid them in attacks against the Russian camps in the 1870s.

In the late 1870s, as the Russians prepared to force the Turkmen tribes into final surrender, General Lomakin attempted to exploit the old hostility between the Tekke and the Yomut Turkmen in order to more quickly conquer the tribes. In February 1877, Lomakin asked the Yomuts for assistance and provisions for the Russian tribes marching against the Tekke areas. After the Russians' first attack upon Goktepe in 1879 (when they were pushed back by the Turkmen, who nonetheless sustained harsh losses), Nur Verdi Khan again managed to bring some of the tribes together to strategize for the defence of Goktepe in the event of another strike by the Russians. Two Yomuts—Musa Khan and Mulla Dungdor—were discovered to be guides to the Russian forces and were turned in by supporters of Nur Verdi Khan.[159] Even the previously disagreeable Jafarbai branch of the Yomuts agreed to place some fighting men under his command. In a turn of events very unfortunate for the

[157] Saray, 97
[158] Yomut statement, cited in Saray, 98
[159] Saray, 175

Turkmen, however, in May of 1880 before the final Russian siege, Nur Verdi Khan—the unifier of the Turkmen tribes who had for the first time established some type of authority among them, though short-lived, died of illness, "leaving his country and people at a most critical time in their history. His death was no less disastrous for the Turkmens than the Russian bombardment."[160] After the death of Nur Verdi Khan, Russian General Skobelev decided to restore relations with the Yomuts and to obtain their assistance no matter what the cost. He invited Koshlu Khan of the Atabai Yomuts, and Irali Khan of the Jafarbai Yomuts, to his headquarters in Chikishlar, where he persuaded them through bribery and promises to assist him with transportation of his troops.[161] After general discussions to consider the offer, some of the Yomuts decided to meet the Russian demands, and others who refused to cooperate emigrated to the Persian side of the Atrek. In this way, tribal rivalry was exploited by Skobelev and quickened the conquest of the Tekke stronghold. The fact that the Yomut Turkmen did not come to the aid of the Tekke defenders of Goktepe remains a point of hostility between members of the Yomut and Tekke tribes even today.

Turkmen historical revision in the post-Soviet period has reinterpreted the conquest and the battle of Goktepe. In schools, Turkmen history books teach students that the battle was a terrible slaughter of all the Turkmen tribes by the Russians. The tribes are often said to have banded together during the battle; other times the tribalism of the Turkmen is acknowledged, but said to have been the factor that brought down the fortress. In this way, the history of Goktepe contributes to the new doctrine of national unity. Citizens of Turkmenistan, however, continue to remember this battle as a point of tribal division—because certain tribes did not come to the

[160] *ibid*., 184. Some accounts even suggest that he was poisoned by the Russians.
[161] *ibid*., 186

assistance of the Tekke, they are viewed as traitorous or as cowardly and are not to be trusted—divisions from the 1880s in this way colour tribal relations to the present day.[162] This follows from Niyazov's assertion that "The idea of tribe is temporary; it constitutes a lower stage in the progress towards national integrity… Debates on tribes should be a thing of the past; each Turkmen should make an effort not to turn to tribal debates."[163]

One of the most interesting examples of historical revisionism in the context of Turkmen national holidays is the creation by Niyazov of Memorial Day (January 12) to commemorate the massacre of 1881 committed by Russian troops at the battle of Goktepe. Aside from underscoring the importance of the battle to the modern historiography, this holiday demonstrates the extent to which the cult of personality dominates official ritual and official holidays. Messages are delivered to the President from all sectors of society on the occasion of Memorial Day, and pilgrimages are made by Niyazov and religious leaders to the site of the battle, today a large memorial mosque. In 2000, for example, Turkmen clergymen pledged devotion to the President on the holiday, stating: "Our Esteemed Leader! You are our only protector chosen by God the almighty for the prosperity of the Turkmen people. You are a supreme source of pride for our courageous people because their lofty dreams and hopes are linked with you. Your genuine wisdom and generosity, your pure soul and your courage have brought to the courageous Turkmen people the great independence…. On the day of 12th January, Memorial Day, one of the sacred dates for all Turkmens, all of us pledge to do our best and will not even spare our life for the sake of fulfilling the superior tasks you put before us."[164]

[162] Author's observations and informal interviews, Turkmenistan, November 2003
[163] Niyazov, *Ruhnama*, 148
[164] Yagshymyrat Atamyradov, Nasrullakh Ibn Ibadullakh, Father Andrey Sapunov, Myrat Karriyev, television broadcast on Ashgabat Channel One, 12 January 2000

A large mosque was constructed on the site of the Goktepe fortress in 1995, representing not only a holy type of respect for the lost lives, but also the independence of the people of Turkmenistan and a return to Islam, the religion loosely followed by the people in the pre-Soviet era. Niyazov uses Goktepe's new mosque—*Haji Saparmurat Turkmenbashy*-- as a symbol for his regime. It is often portrayed in photographs, in the media and on souvenirs of the country. In these ways, Goktepe represents both the regime's construction of a historical "other"—the fact of Russian colonialism and Soviet rule-- and the denial of tribalism as it existed then and as it continues to play a role in Turkmen society.

Conclusion

The construction of a new national narrative in the post-Soviet period has been one of the most dominant elements of Niyazov's campaign for legitimation. While the revision of the national history operates generally within Soviet-era parameters, the content and reasons for this revision are different and show hallmarks of sultanism. The nationalist historiography, a large part of the pseudo-ideology *Ruhnama*, is designed to promote nationalism and unity, to place Niyazov squarely at the centre of national affairs and at the zenith of historical Turkmen state building, and to boast a role for Turkmenistan in world history that has not been expressed in other sources. Chehabi and Linz write, "The sultanist ideology often exalts the nation's ancient glories and draws on an 'invented tradition' to demarcate the nation from its neighbours."[165] Niyazov's historiography is strikingly similar to the revisions of national history in other countries, but the personal aspect of the historical revision is particularly shared by other countries with sultanistic regimes, such as Malawi under

[165] Chehabi and Linz 1, 14

Dr. Hastings Banda.

National narratives are not only written, however. They can be projected into the very image of the country itself through the use of architecture and public space. Ancient glories can be revisited through the use of historical symbols and by monuments to leaders of the past, both mythical and historical. This is certainly true of Turkmenistan, where the capital city Ashgabat has undergone a major facelift in the post-Soviet period, becoming an outward projection of some of the elements of the regime's legitimation program. The next chapter will consider Niyazov's use of the physical environment as a mode for expressions of his power and his version of the history and culture of the Turkmen people.

CHAPTER SIX

SULTANISM AND PUBLIC SPACE

Niyazov's more recent architectural endeavours have made international news—parodied in the West as among the most comical of urban planners, Niyazov has received particular attention for his planned desert ice palace, his Turkmen fairy tale heroes theme park in Ashgabat, and for Turkmenbashy Lake, a lake in the middle of the desert that is costing billions of dollars and will divert water from Uzbekistan. Despite the perceived ridiculousness, there is a deliberate strategy of the regime—to manipulate public space and urban design in order to buttress Niyazov's rule and to secure an image of permanence, monumentality and national unity. Over the past decade, Niyazov has undertaken an almost complete facelift of Ashgabat, transforming it from a mid-sized, typically Soviet town to a world-class example of monumental architecture. This rapid urban development marks one of the most visible post-Soviet changes for Turkmenistan and the new Ashgabat has become a symbol, to the Turkmen people, of the new leadership and the post-Soviet era.

Architecture as a Political Vehicle

Architecture has long been a vehicle for rulers attempting to express their power and to secure and embed their rule through symbols and ritual. Many new rulers undertake to build or to rebuild public spaces, cultural and government buildings. Architecture is one important way in which rulers engineer so-called "invented traditions"—national architecture becomes closely associated with institutional rituals, and together these play a large role in the creation of traditions and national popular symbols. Anthony King writes, "I would maintain that the built environment is more than a mere representation of social order (i.e. a reflector), or simply a mere environment in which social action takes place. Rather, physical and

spatial urban form actually constitute as well as represent much of social and cultural existence: society is to a very large extent constituted through the buildings and spaces that it creates."[1] Crawford Young writes, "States tackle the task of transforming their mundane reality into symbolic splendour with remarkable ingenuity. In the monumental architecture of their capital cities, states affix the signature of power."[2]

Political regimes can make especially powerful symbolic use of the physical environment, buildings, and urban design. Vale writes, "Throughout history and across the globe, architecture and urban design have been manipulated in the service of politics."[3] The use of architecture and public space, writes Andrew March, "conveys numerous substantial messages about the nature of the political community, and this in itself is a significant act of legitimation, but it also conveys a more basic message about the power, stability and permanence of the state and ruler as such. Symbols are meant to awe and inhibit as much as they are meant to identify: The statement of the *fact* of state power clearly serves as a normative act of legitimation."[4] Particularly for sultanistic rulers, architectural symbolism is a significant way to legitimate their rule by imposing their presence into everyday popular imagination. As Clifford Geertz writes, "At the political centre of any complexly organized society... there is both a governing elite and a set of symbolic forms expressing the fact that it is in truth governing."[5] Architecture and the design of cities can be important vehicles for the procurement of regime legitimacy. Sultanistic regimes such

[1] A. D. King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1976), p. 1
[2] Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976)
[3] Lawrence J. Vale, *Architecture, Power and National Identity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 3
[4] Andrew F. March, "The Use and Abuse of History: National Ideology as Transcendental Object in Islam Karimov's Ideology of National Independence," *Central Asian Survey* 21(4):371-384 (2002), p. 377
[5] Geertz, cited in Vale, 12

as Niyazov's manipulate urban design and architecture to embed their pseudo-ideologies, promote themselves, and to gain international recognition.

Much has been written on the questions of architectural meaning, from urban and public spaces to the design of specific buildings, public and private. The work spans a variety of disciplines, from psychology and environmental studies, to architecture, art, and history. While certain studies have dealt with very specific questions of architectural-political meaning—Paul Goodman's 1952 essay on legislative seating or John Hazard's 1962 work on courtroom design and symbolism, for example—more general ideas can be taken from across the fields. Foucault has inspired a range of studies of prisons and structures of governance, and the use of architecture to achieve social control. Structuralism, in its various forms, is one theory that has been adopted in studies of political architecture, particularly when scholars deal with questions of symbolism in shapes or colours in building design. Charles Goodsell writes, "In recent years, several writers on architecture have been attracted to semiotic theory. A building or city is considered a 'text,' which can be 'read' through application of appropriate deciphering codes. "[6] Ideas about iconography are adopted from art history, and ceremonial ritual and symbolism from sociology.

More useful for this thesis are studies specifically concerned with the interplay between politics and architecture. Goodsell notes that examination of public rites and political ceremonies as a means of studying political history is a relatively new movement in historiography,[7] and that "Historians of this school seek to analyse the rhetoric of these rites so as to uncover the 'master fictions' that uphold particular political orders. A more traditional viewpoint would dismiss these ceremonies as

[6] Charles Goodsell, *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority Through Architecture* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1988), p. 32
[7] *ibid.*, 28

constituting the mere clothing of power. But Sean Wilentz asks, 'Could it be... that if people find some sort of meaning in the symbols of power, the clothing, then these mystifications might truly represent the deeper human reality that they are supposed to mask?"[8] Christel Lane's book from the 1970s on the rituals and holidays of the Soviet Union as political symbolism is a work that speaks well to the study of post-Soviet symbolism from a sociological point of view.

Murray Edelman is the premier theorist of symbolism and politics in political science, and he has discussed political stage setting in general terms. "The physical characteristics of political stages, he says, invariably include massiveness, ornateness, and formality. The degree to which the physical setting is emphasized in political performances depends on (1) the importance of impressing large audiences, (2) the need for legitimizing acts and for securing compliance, and (3) the need to establish or reinforce an official's definition of self. Clearly, all three requirements are frequently critical in modern political life."[9] In the book *The Signature of Power*, Harold D. Lasswell considers how buildings as a whole, in addition to being features of urban design, express political values. The height of buildings in a city's skyline, for example, might reflect the power of different economic or political sectors in society.[10] The "degree to which governmental authority wishes to share power with outsiders is expressed in the extent that it operates in closed, versus open, spaces."[11] In this view, despotic regimes favour greater exclusion. "Other writers on politics and architecture stress how structures that governments build express the values and ideology of the prevailing political regime. These authors refer principally to

[8] *ibid*.
[9] Murray Edelman, *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press) and *From Art to Politics: How Artistic Creations Shape Political Conceptions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995)
[10] Harold D. Lasswell, *The Signature of Power* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1979)
[11] Goodsell, 29

facades.... David Milne contends that public buildings enshrine each civilization's code of law and order and thus perform a conservative, stabilizing function for the society."[12] "'The political demand,' states Milne, 'is that architecture shall make edifices befitting the importance and power of these institutions, that it shall make these institutions appear mighty and durable, and that it shall, in its symbolism and expressive form, state dramatically something of these institutions' idea of the world.'"[13] Flavio Conti has written on "shrines of power," and Helio Pinon contends that "the geometry, the proportions, and the hierarchical organization of interior space are capable of inferring a divine order, which in turn legitimizes systems of corrupt authority and social control."[14] Lawrence Vale's book *Architecture, Power, and National Identity* explores elements of urban design and capitol complex construction in several post-colonial capitals, discussing the ways in which regimes of newly independent countries use architecture to consolidate new ideologies and promote national identity.

Architecture can be a very symbolic art form, and a particularly politically-charged one, especially the architecture of buildings within a capital city or of buildings with political functions. Our task is to select which buildings were constructed with primarily political purposes, and to interpret the ways in which the architecture is meant to convey meaning to the public audience. Nelson Goodman, in his essay "How Buildings Mean," undertakes to "consider how such works may mean, how we determine what they mean, how they work, and why it matters."[15] Buildings, Goodman points out, have been said to do many things—to "allude, express, evoke, invoke, comment, quote; [buildings can be] syntactical, literal,

[12] *ibid*.
[13] *ibid*.
[14] Flavio Conti, *Shrines of Power* (Boston: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: 1977)
[15] N. Goodman and C. Elgin, *Reconceptions in Philosophy* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1988), p. 33

metaphorical, dialectical; that are ambiguous or even contradictory!"[16] Buildings can have meanings closely connected with their particularly architectural elements or design, or meanings that are created quite separately, through historical meanings associated with the site, or for its designated use. While any mausoleum can symbolize death, and any expensive courthouse might represent government extravagance, these meanings are separate from architectural meaning—as Goodman writes, "To mean in such a way is not thereby to function as an architectural work."[17] Meaning, or representation, does however occur "in salient ways in some architectural works."[18] Buildings can alter environments very visibly—as a work of art, a building "may through various avenues of meaning, inform and reorganize our entire experience. Like other works of art—and like scientific theories, too—it can give new insight, advance understanding, participate in our continual remaking of a world."[19]

Architecture, particularly in capital cities or areas with political significance and function, can be used either to reflect or to help create the trappings of charismatic leadership. The architecture and design of certain cities can be closely intertwined with the images of political leaders, and many cities come to be associated quite closely with a regime or one leader in particular. Cities designed by leaders can become lasting representations of those men—can turn men into legends. This is particularly true of capital cities and capitol building complexes, where the identification between a particular leader and a building or structure is often very close. Using visual symbols and public space—and architecture as a demonstration of political power—are ways of "collapsing time and identifying the ruler himself with

[16] *ibid.*, 33-34
[17] *ibid.*, 44
[18] *ibid.*, 34
[19] *ibid.*, 48

the transcendental icon."[20]

Colonialism and post-colonialism are fascinating eras in which to explore the political significance of architecture. European colonial powers very often used urban design and construction to control and manipulate native populations, their economies, and their political lives (e.g. British Cairo, the French throughout Morocco). Leaders of postcolonial and newly independent countries have, historically, used architecture and urban design, particularly the design of capital cities, to represent national unity, national independence, and to symbolize the legitimacy of their rule. Elleh writes, "There are several methods of cleansing the collective memories of communities. Architecture is one of the most powerful methods by virtue of its visibility, stability, multiple functions, history, and of course, visual representations."[21] Vale writes,

> The perceived need to make architecture and urban design serve politics is most salient in those countries where the form of politics is new and the forms of architecture are old, though the phenomenon has a long and global pedigree. In the emerging post-colonial world of the middle and late twentieth century, the leadership of newly independent states has frequently attempted to use architecture not only to house a new form of government but also to proclaim the worthiness of the new regime and advance its status.[22]

Particularly in post-colonial settings, constructing new buildings and cities can help with embedding a new nationalism. Building a new national identity can involve removing reminders of old regimes (either by moving the capitol, capital, or by rebuilding or redecorating it), as well as constructing new symbols and representations of the new regime and new national identity.

Sultanistic regimes can have a field day with architecture as a tool for

[20] March, "Use and Abuse of History," 377
[21] N. Elleh, *Architecture and Power in Africa* (Westport and London: Praeger Publishers, 2002), p. 162
[22] Vale, 10

embedding their rule, deepening their pseudo-ideologies and attempting to construct an air of charisma to surround the leader. The absence of independent economic or political power holders means that the state has complete control over new construction if it chooses to exercise that authority. This chapter concerns several elements of architecture and urban design: pseudo-ideology (how architecture reflects nationalist programs of sultanistic leaders), created charisma (pictorial and architectural representations of the personality cult), as well as international image and monumental architecture. How does Niyazov use architecture and capital design to buttress his pseudo-ideology and legitimate his rule?

This chapter will explore postcolonial capital city architecture as a phenomenon and its implications for constructing a new national identity and legitimating postcolonial regimes. It will review typologies of European colonial cities, and the theories behind the Soviet city-- Soviet urban design will be considered as a starting point for a discussion of contemporary Ashgabat, one of the most unusual capitals in the post-Soviet space. Through a discussion of Niyazov's changes in the construction and design of Ashgabat, this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which Niyazov uses architecture—from mosques and hotels to monuments to parliament buildings—to legitimate his rule, promote his variant of Turkmen national identity, and promote an external image of grandeur.

Capitalizing on Capitals

The capital city is a natural starting-point for architectural or urban re-design by a new regime, particularly in a postcolonial setting. A capital symbolizes power in more ways than one—it is the city whose skyline becomes the international image of a nation, the city in which government buildings are placed and the country's political

and economic leaders tend to reside, and it is often strategically located in naturally significant zones—areas with access to major ports or that are well-connected to allies and isolated from enemies. A capital is very often the wealthiest of a country's regions. "Government buildings are... an attempt to build governments and to support specific regimes. More than mere homes for government leaders, they serve as symbols of the state. We can, therefore, learn much about a political regime by observing closely what it builds."[23] Vale writes, "From ancient citadel to modern capital, cities have focused on the place of rule. Increasingly, politicians have moved to claim the privileged urban heights reserved in an earlier age for the gods. Promoted as a means to advance national unity and consolidate national identity, these capital cities have more obviously served to demonstrate the power of their sponsoring regimes. They convey, through urban design, the desired image of political impregnability."[24] "A capital city, more than most other cities, is expected to be a symbolic centre. As such it is not so distant from the primal motivations that inspired the first cities... (as ceremonial pilgrimages points)."[25] There are several ways in which the design of capitals, and particularly government buildings, can represent a regime's effort at legitimation. Urban areas may denote a regime's propaganda through explicit use of text and iconography, may "exemplify certain architectonic properties which invite or repel, may express through metaphor a regime's desired association with some other kind of favoured environment, and may, through the process of mediated reference, encourage connection to certain broader concepts (such as democracy or nationalism) which may well stray far afield from strictly architectural units of meaning."[26]

[23] *ibid.*, 3
[24] *ibid.*, 160
[25] *ibid.*, 11
[26] *ibid.*, 161

Both politicians and architects (often reflecting current, and sometimes culture-specific, architectural styles) leave their marks on design and construction. Vale suggests that every design solution is to some extent an idealization of the political realm. "To ask how a designer chooses certain spatial forms as appropriate to accompany a given political idea or preferred model of cultural pluralism raises an even more fundamental question: who decides which ideals are to be pursued?"[27] One must analyse both ideals and their architectural depiction carefully. A capitol complex is always a kind of crude diagram of power relation, but there is no direct correlation between a particular diagram and a particular form of political organization.[28] Architects, and those awarded commissions for urban design, can leave their mark on the final product. In most situations, an authoritarian regime will maintain strong controls over what type of product is finally constructed, but the architect's style makes a mark. The selection of architects and firms to construct these capitol complexes can reflect a ruler's hope for the end product of the design.

Architecture and Sultanism in Africa

African sultans have left behind many striking examples of capital city reconstruction and architectural symbolism that exemplify this type of political legitimation in cases of extreme personalism. From huge, expensive palaces, to basilicas and royal courts in the style of King Louis, African sultans have run the gamut in terms of architectural style. Across the board, however, their design decisions reflect their cults of leadership, their desire to create charisma, and their attempts to embed their pseudo-ideology in material ways to further legitimate themselves and give their regimes a more permanent dimension.

[27] *ibid.*, 278
[28] *ibid.*, 277

One of the most fascinating examples from the sub-Saharan region, and one that is very salient as a comparison with Turkmenistan in terms of post-colonial religious architecture, comes from a regime that, while not always considered as sultanistic, certainly falls within the category of patrimonial personalism. This is the regime of Felix Houphouet-Boigny in the Ivory Coast. His decision to build a basilica in his home village of Yamoussoukro, inspired by St. Peter's in the Vatican and intended to be the largest basilica in Africa, is an interesting parallel and predecessor to Niyazov's decision in 2004 to build the largest mosque in Central Asia in his home village of Kipjak. In the book *Architecture and Power in Africa*, Elleh considers the "manner in which the object functions as a consolidator of the president's image as 'great leader.' Yamoussoukro [the city] and its edifice seem to have been planned as the centre from which images of the president would circulate and dominate the country's offices, shopping plazas, civic centres, public parks, television, radio, and, most important, public opinion."[29] Portraits of the president adorn the entrances, and the construction of the basilica (and the invitation to the Pope to participate in its inauguration) seem to support the idea that the basilica was largely a public relations and personality cult-buttressing idea for the President himself and not a project for the country, as the majority of the citizens of Ivory Coast are not even Catholic.[30]

Yamoussoukro was officially declared the political capital of the Ivory Coast in 1983, although the former French colonial capital, Abidjan, is still the largest city and indisputable cultural, economic, and political centre for most of the country's people. Elleh writes, "Like many newly created capital cities around the world, Yamoussoukro is an isolated place."[31] The transfer of the capital from Abidjan to

[29] Elleh, 67
[30] J. M. Edwards, "West Africa's Capital of Ghosts," Salon.com, 1998
[31] Elleh, 131

Yamoussoukro has very little to do with a development-driven narrative and much more to do with the biography of President Houphouet-Boigny.

Malawi also experienced a capital city relocation in the post-colonial period, from Zomba to Lilongwe. In the case of Malawi, as in the Ivory Coast, scholars argue that the move was made primarily for "personal prestige" of the leader rather than as a real attempt at equitable restructuring of Malawi's economy.[32] Deborah Potts argues that Banda's stated desire to move the capital to Lilongwe (formulated during his time in jail prior to independence) was the driving factor behind the relocation. She writes, "His choice of Lilongwe as the new capital could be related to the regional planning needs of Malawi; but to assume that this was a primary objective for the move may be no more than post-hoc rationalization. As the initial stimulus for the project came from the president, his personal motives obviously cannot be ignored. To some extent his motives would parallel those of any government, in as much as he also had need of popular support and an effective location for his administration. But some individual motives can be suggested. Connell, for instance, has speculated on whether Lilongwe was chosen partly as the result of regional or ethnic loyalty, as it is located near Kasungu where Banda was born, and it is also near the core area of his ethnic group, the Chewa. However, Lilongwe must also be a source of personal gratification. The president associated himself directly with its establishment, and his key role in master-minding both the initial decision to move and the actual construction of much of the new part of the city has been emphasized. Banda's almost unique decision-making power within his own country makes viable the notion that Lilongwe began as more of a personal prestige symbol than as a rational element of an attempt to

[32] In E. Schatz, "What Capital Cities Say About Nation Building," *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 9(4): 111-140 (2003), p. 117

restructure Malawi's space economy more equitably."[33] One reason for the move to Lilongwe was, Schatz argues, to consolidate power against rival ethnic groups. Moving a capital city can help leaders to undermine rival patronage networks and to bolster their own. Capital relocation is "an act replete with symbolic import. New capitals are designed to highlight the state's place in the international system."[34]

Turkmenistan's post-Soviet regime made no move to relocate the capital city; however, certain comparisons are very salient with the cases above regardless. The changes that have been made in post-Soviet Ashgabat are akin to constructing a new city—although the location remains the same, the nature of the city and its planning have changed significantly.

Colonial Capitals and the Socialist City

Because this chapter concerns a modern capital of a newly independent nation, Turkmenistan, it serves to discuss briefly the roots of post-colonial capital cities in colonialism, in order to better understand the nature of recent changes. Colonial cities—that is, cities that are created or developed primarily to be the capitals of colonized countries by the imperial power—have historical significance mainly in that they have provided some of the major links (economic, political, and cultural) between cores and periphery during periods of imperialism, "articulating the flow of capital, people, commodities, and culture that flowed between them."[35] Spatial politics of modern colonial cities is a vast subject—each imperial power exhibited particular traits and a detailed depiction is beyond the scope of this paper. But, as Vale writes, "If we are to understand the politics and symbolism of the location of

[33] D. Potts, "Capital Relocation in Africa: The Case of Lilongwe in Malawi," *The Geographical Journal* 151(2):182-196 (1985), p. 188
[34] Schatz, 121
[35] King, *Urbanism*, 7

capitals and capitols in postcolonial situations… some discussion of the colonial capital experience is undoubtedly necessary."[36] This section briefly outlines some of the typologies of colonial cities (used to depict cities under European colonial rule) and demonstrates the ways in which cities in Central Asia and specifically Ashgabat, exhibited many of these characteristics both after Russian conquest and also under the early years of Soviet rule.

The major characteristics of cities in colonized countries, according to King, fall into seven categories that broadly refer to geopolitical, functional, political/economic, political, social/cultural, racial/ethnic, and physical/spatial features of the city. King concludes that some unique features of the colonial city are (1) that power is principally in the hands of a non-indigenous minority; and the rights of the colonized are restricted; (2) the minority is superior militarily, technologically, and economically, and as a result, in social organization; and (3) the colonized majority are racially (or ethnically), culturally, and religiously different from the colonists.[37] These characteristics are all applicable to Turkmenistan's capital city, Ashgabat, which was founded as a military outpost by the Tsarist Russian government; they are arguably also applicable to the Soviet period in some respects—Soviet socialist capital design, however, has some elements that are unique, and these will be discussed below.

Although Soviet cities in far-reaching provinces such as the Central Asian republics can be said to exhibit elements of colonial cities, there are, without argument, elements of these cities that were more Soviet than European-style colonial. Whereas colonial cities featured a strong division of wealth and class, the socialist city was designed precisely to counter that capitalist urban structure. While

[36] Vale, 67
[37] King, *Urbanism*, 20

the dissolution of class and wealth distinctions may or may not have been realized in practice, and ethnic separation never completely disappeared in the Soviet Union, Soviet cities were designed with these goals and therefore the urban design was supposed to change the way people organize themselves, and not to reinforce old class divisions (although in some ways, it did and also created new class divisions).

A debate remains in the literature as to what constitutes a socialist city—or, indeed, if there are enough significant categorical differences between socialist and "capitalist" cities that a serious distinction can be made. However, several characteristics set socialist city-planning apart, and in general socialist cities tend to have a distinctive appearance. "Urban living has a particular significance in Marxism, as a progressive force encouraging collective rather than individual identity, and city planning was viewed as an important means of achieving political purposes."[38] "Central planning along with state ownership of land meant that urban development could be subjected to much greater control than under capitalism. The internal structure of the socialist city was supposed to be planned to facilitate the delivery of a wide range of social services as means of collective consumption, in addition to facilitating the planned development of the productive forces in the interests of the efficient operation of the economy."[39] The ideal of the socialist city, as discussed by Demko and Regulska, is:

> The abolition of private property, removal of privileged classes, and application of equity principles espoused by Marxist/socialist leaders should radically alter urban patterns. In the housing arena, the expectation would be one of non-discriminatory, non-spatially differentiated housing in general. No social or occupational group would have better or more favourably located residential sites so that one would find a randomly distributed housing pattern. Similarly, public services of all kinds, including transportation, should be of

[38] D. Smith, 71-72
[39] *ibid.*, 72

> equal quality, availability and accessibility, commuting to work... would be minimised and no group would be more dependent on or penalized by such travel than others. Such amenities as high quality physical environment, including recreational environment, would be equally accessible to all. All such urban conditions would be similarly equitably arranged and available.[40]

Elements of urban design that were emphasized in the Soviet Union were cheap public transport, public provision of housing, and the "apartment blocks which came to predominate which give such a special character to the urban landscape."[41] After World War II, the *mikroraion* (micro-region or district) became the basic building block of the Soviet city. The *mikroraion* "Comprised a neighbourhood unit of living spaces in the form of blocks of flats, along with associated services, for perhaps 5,000 to 15,000 people. Pedestrian precincts linked restaurants, nurseries, kindergartens, club rooms, libraries and sports facilities, as well as educational, health, retail and cultural services."[42] Thus, people were to have a wide range of day-to-day needs satisfied within their immediate locality. Smith writes, "This, together with per capita norms within similar identical blocks of flats, suggests something approaching equality in living standards...."[43]

Socialist cities, of course, are not all historically the same. David Smith makes a distinction between "partially-changed cities" and new cities—the former being in his conception old European cities that retained some elements of pre-Soviet design in the Soviet period. Soviet Central Asia offers examples of both types of cities—partially changed and new. In formerly nomadic areas, that is, present day Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan, which before Russian contact had no real towns, "military strong points like Vernyy (Almaty), Pishpek (Frunze), or Ashgabat

[40] *ibid.*
[41] *ibid.*
[42] *ibid.*, 75
[43] *ibid.*

served as starting points for new cities. Their layout corresponded to the general conception of Russian colonial cities at that time. They were characterized by a regular pattern of chessboard or radial design; wide streets were lined on either side with rows of trees and small irrigation ditches, behind which stood almost exclusively one-storied, colour-washed houses in gardens separated from each other by low mud walls. The exterior of municipal buildings was hardly different from that presented by simple dwellings."[44] It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century, under the influence of rising real estate costs, that a change to multi-storied buildings set in. Giese writes, "The wide space allotted to back gardens and open parks is noteworthy. Being primarily designed as garrison and administrative cities, the Russian town quarters are provided with the usual military institutions, barracks, drill squares, parade squares, and an officers' mess, in addition to various administrative facilities."[45]

In the old cities of Central Asia—for example Bukhara and Samarkand (both historically Islamic centres and designed in that way) the epochs of Russian and then Soviet rule are easy to observe on maps. The populations before the Soviet era were very separated—Islamic population of Uzbek and Tajik natives from the Russian colonizers. But as the Soviet prefabricated housing developments, educational institutions, and factories came into place, structures changed slowly. Also, the development of different types of commerce and trade took some of the focus away from the bazaars and gave it first to the Russian univermag stores and shopping streets, and then when those seemed insufficient, to the semi-private *kolkhoz* markets that sprang up in response to popular demands and wants.

Stated Soviet urban planning is the first and most obvious reason for the

[44] Giese, 152
[45] *ibid*.

changes undertaken architecturally and in capital city design. New, overarching obligatory principles of city planning took hold after the Revolution—Giese writes, "Leitmotiv of the principles proclaimed is the expression of power held by the State and Party and, also, the visualization of the sought-for transformation of society in cities. Visible expression of the need for representation and self-assertion of Soviet government and Communist Party are the large Central Square for Party manifestations and national festivities, the wide Main Street, the Prospect of Boulevard for parades and public festivals, representative buildings for purposes of the Party and cultural requirements, as well as large, conspicuous administrative offices in dominating positions in the centre of the city."[46] Traditional Islamic old towns, known for narrow, blind-alley street systems and closely interwoven cell structure of living quarters, were transformed, and large open squares—previously foreign to Islamic urban areas-- became "the dominating functional and stylistic elements of the socialist city."[47]

Economics eventually prompted large changes in urban layout of Central Asian cities, both those designed by Russians as military strongholds and those Islamic cities that predated Russian conquest. In all cities, "the importance of traditional crafts and home industry decreased. The home-industry products were steadily replaced by Russian imports, especially due to a marked decline in the quality of handcraft production. As a result, the bazaar lost its attractiveness and business... steadily shifted to the Russian town."[48] Additionally, segregation—practiced earlier between the Russian and native populations—dissolved and new norms of social interaction took hold.

[46] *ibid.*, 157
[47] *ibid.*
[48] *ibid.*, 154

The Building of Ashgabat

Prior to the 20th century, most Turkmen did not live in cities. The mobility of the nomadic lifestyle was seen as their guarantee of independence and autonomy, and Turkmen "looked down on neighbouring peasant peoples as weak and easily victimized."[49] Turkmen, before the Russian conquest, had a strong cultural preference for nomadic pastoralism. Edgar writes, "It was considered 'more Turkmen' to migrate with one's flocks than to plough one's fields."[50]

In contrast to seats of Islamic learning and well-established old towns such as Samarkand and Khiva, Ashgabat was from the beginning a construction of the colonialists. First founded as a Russian military outpost in 1881, Ashgabat was mainly inhabited by Russian settlers filling military and administrative roles, and only gradually expanded to include various industrial sectors and to attract an influx of indigenous population. In contrast to older Central Asian cities, in Ashgabat there was no division between the areas inhabited by Russian settlers and the areas inhabited by the Turkmen natives. All of the city's neighbourhoods, basically, were newly constructed. Though Ashgabat provides no examples of the separation between Russian new and Islamic old towns, it is an excellent forum for the study of colonial capital construction, Soviet development, and the creation of a new national capital in Niyazov's image. This section presents a historical context in which to understand Ashgabat's contemporary changes—at its core, Niyazov's project of modern capital reconstruction is meant to divorce post-Soviet Ashgabat from its Soviet architectural roots.

The composition and layout of the new city reflected its function as a military

[49] Adrienne Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), p. 23
[50] *ibid*.

stronghold. Ashgabat's first buildings, therefore, were the fortress (on a high hill, built of unbaked brick), the Transcaspian Province military administrative buildings, the provincial administration, and the officers' quarters. After construction of the administrative buildings for the military, homes were built for functionaries, the clergy, and their merchants, followed by living quarters for skilled workers who came from Russia, Persia and the Caucasus.

Three centres eventually emerged in the city, centring on the fortress, the railroad station, and the trading centre. The fortress, and the broad esplanade encircling it (now Neutrality Square) became the town's aristocratic centre. The square was surrounded by solid, thick-walled homes with grills on the windows and abutments on the corners, among which stood the splendid home in which the head of the Transcaucasian Province lived. Historically, today's central squares were the city centre both from the points of view of planning and composition.[51]

The 1885 extension of the Transcaspian railway to Ashgabat brought a compositional change to the city-- the railroad station and its environs became a major focus of the city. The area around the station was inhabited by railway labourers and craftsmen, whose houses were squat and crowded together, with smaller gardens than in the aristocratic neighbourhood.[52] The fortress and railroad areas were separated by a broad, straight east-west street, which formed a symbolic boundary between the civil servants and military, on the one hand, and the craftsmen and workers on the other (this street in the Soviet period was renamed Freedom Street). Not far from the fortress' residential area, a grim building called the Russian Bazaar was built. It "overflowed with small and medium-sized shops, stalls, living quarters for traders,

[51] A. Esenow, *Architecture in the Epoch of Saparmurat Turkmenbashy the Great* (Ashgabat, 2003), p. 67. See also Esenow, *History of Architecture in Turkmenistan* (Ashgabat: Rukh, 2001), especially the final chapter on contemporary architecture.
[52] I. Pasevyev, *Ashgabat: A Guide* (Moscow: Progress, 1982), p. 11

and caravanserais."[53] "Manufacturing concerns began to appear: cotton ginneries, a sweets factory, a factory for the manufacture of construction materials–bricks and lime, soft-drink factory, and other enterprises. There were already more than fifty such concerns before the First World War. . . . Apart from the railway depot, printing works, electrical plant, and wine-making factories, all the other concerns together employed only slightly over two hundred workers."[54]

The city's western region was constructed in a different way than the rest of the city. The western area—which adjoined the fortress on the hilltop—was built on a radial ring plan. Here, the streets emerged into a broad esplanade, which was the setting for military parades and drills, inspections, and ritual changing of the guards. The buildings in this area were attractively designed and branchy plane-trees, slender cypresses, and leafy maples were planted along both sides of the street. The rest of the city was built on a checkered-rectangular pattern that remained throughout the Soviet period.[55]

The Russian Revolution marked the first major change of power in this colonial capital's history and began an era in which Turkmen people slowly urbanized. Ashgabat, renamed Poltoratsk (in honour of one of the fallen Bolshevik revolutionaries) after 1919, became the capital of Turkmenistan after the 1924 demarcation. At the time of the Revolution, most of the urban areas in Transcaspia—Ashgabat included-- were so heavily dominated by Russians that proposals arose suggesting that Turkmen should govern the rural areas and Russians the urban areas. These, along with declarations of autonomous Turkmen government, were dismissed by the Bolsheviks. For the Turkmen, the early Soviet period was a time of serious

[53] *ibid.*
[54] *ibid.*, 12
[55] *ibid.*, 12

identity crisis, as the Soviets attempted to engineer a nation-state out of nomadic tribes. Edgar writes, "The making of a modern nation-state requires a shift from a local conception of territorial belonging– the view that one's village is one's homeland, in essence– to a broader understanding of the 'national space.' But the leap required of the Turkmen was larger still. Like many other historically nomadic groups, the Turkmen conceptualized community boundaries in terms of genealogy rather than territory. Instead of a spatial landscape of interconnected villages and towns, they conceived of a network of interconnected kin groups and ancestors, a genealogical tree whose branches had no necessary relationship to specific geographical locations."[56] The first decade of Soviet rule saw the beginning of this shift from a genealogical to a territorial conception of Turkmen identity. Under Soviet rule, Turkmen quickly urbanized as city life was deemed the most Soviet style of life, and Ashgabat grew into an exemplar Soviet city. Completely reconstructed after a devastating earthquake in 1948, Ashgabat by the 1980s was a city almost entirely Soviet in style and one which epitomized a new Soviet design—although certain aspects of the original Tsarist layout were preserved in the reconstruction schemes, the city's aesthetic post-1948 was purely Soviet.

Ashgabat developed relatively quickly under the Soviets. The layout changed and it was divided, like many Soviet cities, into mikroraions. Streets were named for Soviet heroes, schools and hospitals constructed, and prefabricated housing developments constructed. There was enormous expansion in Ashgabat during the 1930s, although most of the construction from that period did not survive the 1948 earthquake. Another period of construction and expansion occurred between the 1950s and 1970s, and many of the buildings constructed at that time still stand in

[56] Edgar, *Tribal Nation,* 42

Ashgabat. In the 1950s the government introduced the "semi classic monumental style. In the 1960s the city grew significantly, and several districts of four-and five-story apartment buildings were built of red bricks or concrete in the faceless "Khrushchevki" style. At the same time with the arrival of the much needed Karakum Canal, the city administration ordered planting of numerous trees and bushes."[57]

The earthquake in 1948 devastated most of Ashgabat and surrounding rural areas. Ashgabat's reconstruction began immediately, resulting in an architectural rebirth. Almost every building in the city needed to be rebuilt. Even some buildings that had survived, but needed fundamental repairs, were razed to the ground. The government considered moving the capital to a new site, sparing some expense involved in immediate site clearing and reconstruction, but this idea was unpopular and ultimately rejected. Ashgabat's plans were changed in some respects, although the city was rebuilt along its former planning outlines because certain parks, pavements, and municipal communications were undamaged. Large changes occurred; streets were made broader and straighter, squares designed as single ensembles, and dozens of green belts, boulevards, public gardens, and flowerbeds penetrated the city's neighbourhoods. Cautions were taken to construct buildings more suitable for a seismic area, as well as to relocate certain sectors, including constructing residential areas further from the earthquake zones. The costly rebuilding, carried out "according to modern urbanity conceptions," "deeply modified its urban plan, lending to Ashgabat the appearance of a pleasant modern city, with wide avenues and stately buildings that recall in their style ornamental patterns characteristic of Turkmen traditional architecture."[58] The reconstruction resulted in a

[57] R. Abazov, *Historical Dictionary of Turkmenistan* (Lanham, Maryland: Scarecrow Press, 2005), p. 20

[58] from "Ashgabat", online at www.turkmenistan.it/asgabatgb.html

truly Soviet city, reflected in its residential central public space and monuments.

Soviet cities were designed to emphasize the socialist ideal of equality in housing, and this was visible in residential areas of Soviet Ashgabat. First, the grouping of the residential areas into defined mikroraion neighbourhoods ensured a better provision of services. Prior to the earthquake and reconstruction, residential neighbourhoods or microraions did not exist, and their creation expanded the city to three times its previous size. Before 1948, Ashgabat had 540,000 square meters of residential accommodation, all of which was levelled by the earthquake. By 1980 there were 3,380,000 square meters, comprising three administrative districts—the eastern Soviet district, the central Proletarian district, and the Lenin district in western Ashgabat. Each neighbourhood contained services for its residents—barber shops, pharmacies, cinemas, laundries and social clubs.[59] Residential buildings in Soviet Ashgabat generally were constructed between two and four stories, all with balconies and verandas. Due to the harsh summer climate, residential buildings were somewhat different from other Soviet cities—with large walls and few windows, covered in the summer to protect from the sun. In addition to considerations of climate, residential buildings must be resistant to seismic shocks—large block buildings were regarded as especially durable. Combined, these factors increased the cost of construction in Ashgabat compared with construction in other Soviet cities.

Aside from the residential areas, which lent a Soviet style to the city due to their uniform construction, public spaces and the city centre gave Ashgabat some of its Soviet look. By the 1980s, in fact, Ashgabat was considered to epitomize cutting-edge Soviet modernist architecture. Soviet architects discussed at that time the creation of a so-called "Ashgabat School" of architecture, incorporating a broad

[59] Pasevyev, 26

approach to urban design best seen in the design of Soviet Ashgabat's central Karl Marx Square and the attached esplanade, which stand out in comparison to the layout of traditional Central Asian cities. Fountains and the trademark iron-concrete blocks were elements of this Ashgabat architectural style. Pasevyev writes, "The overall appearance of Ashgabat and other Turkmen cities is not that of stylised architecture in a pseudo-Eastern style, but a result of the creative striving to combine the technical achievements of Soviet architecture and modern aesthetic principles, taking into account the specific features of Turkmen nature and climate."[60]

The city's centre—Karl Marx square—which best reflected these ideas, was dominated by the Karl Marx library, the administrative offices for the construction of the Karakum canal, and other distinctive buildings, along with drooping willow trees and ponds. The square, envisioned by architects A. Akhmedov, F. Aliev, and B. Shpak, was said to have evolved a new "architecture of the earth." The library was built of large cement blocks, and was considered to be "to Ashgabat what the Admiralty Spire is to Leningrad, or the Eiffel Tower for Paris, or the Kremlin for Moscow." Soviet architects believed that "this building [would] undoubtedly have a marked influence on the further development of Soviet architecture. It [was] for good reason that its designers were awarded one of the country's highest distinctions, the State Prize. As for Ashgabat, the Library's determining influence on the formation of the city centre [was] visible. It… determined a new scale for buildings, new planning axes in the structure of Turkmenia's capital, and [gave] it a new appearance altogether."[61] The library was built of simple, undecorated concrete, as opposed to expensive marble or granite, and the richness of the building was meant to lie not in the materials of construction but in the proportions and multi-levelled space. The

[60] *ibid.*, 99
[61] *ibid.*, 38

library contained 16 reading halls, periodical rooms, research rooms, and particular reading rooms for "foreign literature, technical literature, agricultural literature, halls for reading microfilms, for rare and precious books, a general reading room, and a conference hall with a film projector."[62]

From the late 1970s there were plans to rebuild central Ashgabat to better suit the needs of the population and to expand the city southward. These plans never came to fruition, however, due to the collapse of the Soviet Union. The general plan, adopted in the late 1970s, envisaged an expansion eastwards, southeastwards, and westwards, with development of a broad forested belt along the shores of the Karakum Canal. Plans were developed for the creation of a large, new city centre to better suit the needs of the residents. The axis of the planned centre was to run from the major square—Karl Marx Square, southwards towards the mountains. Although the rebuilding did not take place under the Soviets, in the post-Soviet period the capital has been reconstructed yet again—with the central squares gaining a position of significance, both as recreational areas and the location of the governing complexes.

Architecture in the Epoch of Saparmurat Turkmenbashy: Facades of Power

One of the most noticeable changes in Turkmenistan in the post-Soviet period is its outward appearance in the capital city. Ashgabat, to the international visitor, betrays its Soviet heritage– unlike capitals in neighbouring Central Asian republics, Ashgabat more closely resembles Dubai or Las Vegas than a former Soviet outpost. Its marble and glass buildings gleam and large, newly paved roads and public squares lead into clusters of government buildings, constructed as shrines of power that reflect

[62] *ibid.*, 37

Niyazov's vision of himself and his role as the father of independent Turkmenistan. The regime is quite proud of its architectural accomplishments. The State Information Agency of Turkmenistan in a recent statement commented, "The best works of the modern architecture of Ashgabat, the fantastically beautiful White City, are in the focus of thousands of cameras. Professionals and amateurs shoot these wonderful creations of the human spirit, refined taste and well-thought town-planning ideas for their descendants. The pictures of Ashgabat sights have been published in many illustrated magazines and journals in different countries of the world; they appear on many pages of the major newspapers and magazines of Europe, Asia, and America. They continue inspiring the artists, who find more and more new perspectives for their creative works."[63]

The appearance of post-Soviet Ashgabat has several dimensions– on the one hand a reflection of Niyazov's vision of self-importance and megalomania, the city's buildings also reflect the influence of foreign architects and architectural firms, a desire for international prestige and to impress outsiders with a rich facade, and a mission to create a city that is a symbol of independent statehood that captures the pride and hearts of Turkmenistan citizens. From presidential buildings to hotels, sports complexes, and religious buildings, each piece of recent construction in Ashgabat reflects some aspect of Niyazov's pseudo-ideology. The architecture is infused with symbols of his power and indeed becomes a symbol in itself, with monumental buildings and statues featuring prominently in regime propaganda. Ashgabat is a shrine to Niyazov– beyond the golden statues and ubiquitous portraits of the man lies a general attempt to manipulate perceptions through architecture and urban environment, sharing the techniques (although not the style) of post-colonial

[63] State Information Agency of Turkmenistan, "Architecture of Ashgabat," 2005

regimes in other corners of the globe. Niyazov's redesign of Ashgabat is an attempt to signify his power domestically, to embed his nationalist pseudo-ideology, and to give an aura of international grandeur to his capital. This section will explore each of these three elements in its architectural incarnation-- the city's layout and the changes in the city centre (formerly Karl Marx square); the development of new monument complexes, including Ruhnama Park and the Independence Monuments, and the growth of commercial and hotel buildings, particularly in the new Berzengi area.

Public reaction to Niyazov's building projects throughout Turkmenistan—and particularly the essential rebuilding of the capital city—appear to have received a mixed reaction from citizens in Turkmenistan. During informal interviews conducted with Turkmen citizens during visits over the 2003-2004 period, respondents showed both huge admiration for and pride in their revitalized capital, and scepticism about expenditure of public funds. For example, several respondents expressed dissatisfaction at Ashgabat's huge number of fountains when the country's population has difficulty locating sources of drinking water. In addition, housing demolitions that parallel the rebuilding (which have not been accompanied in all cases by compensation to the families who are displaced) have caused a great deal of hardship for both displaced families and the relatives or friends who provide them shelter following the destruction of their neighbourhoods. At the same time, however, most families seem to enjoy visiting the public parks throughout Ashgabat, and school groups, visitors from other regions of Turkmenistan, and wedding parties regularly visit and photograph the various monuments and public spaces.

Street Layout and Street Names

One noticeable difference is in the design, layout, and even the names of

Ashgabat's streetplan and roadways. Ashgabat's streetplan, at a basic level, has an axial orientation—the roads are "not simply paved open spaces; they are paths."[64] The centre of the city is clearly dominated by the Presidential Palace and Neutrality Square, and the roads lead toward these areas. With the numbering and renaming of the streets, the axiality became even more apparent. On the 10 March, 2001, the newspaper *Neytralnyy Turkmenistan* published Niyazov's decree that abolished street names—under the law, only six streets in Ashgabat would retain their names, and the rest would be numbered. The general scheme of the numbering is that the centremost numbered street is 2000, marking the first year in the new "golden century" of the Turkmen. Moving to the north, the streets increase at odd-number intervals—2001, 2003, 2005 and so on. To the west, the numbers increase on the even-number intervals—2002, 2004, and so on. The southern streets run in the negative direction on odd-number intervals (1999, 1997, etc.) and to the east, negatively on even intervals (Refer to Appendix B for maps and diagrams depicting the numbering of streets).[65] The street 2000 and the named streets that form the city's centre also are the centres for government buildings and political activity—emphasizing the central role of the presidential administration in Ashgabat.

The streets that are named (not numbered) reflect the new historiography and the cult of personality and parenthood, and contribute to their embedding—Saparmurat Turkmenbashy, Atamurat Niyazov, and Magtumguly Street are three of the major thoroughfares, along with Galkynysh Shayoly (Independence Street), and Bitarap Turkmenistan Shayoly (Neutral Turkmenistan Street). In common parlance, however, many Ashgabat residents continue to refer to the streets by their Soviet names.

[64] Molly Glenn, "Architecture and Power," 32
[65] Article, "Tsifrovoye obozhacheniye ulits v Ashgabate," *Neytralnyy Turkmenistan*, 10 March 2001

The renaming of the streets, and the creation of new streets running out to the Berzengi district and out of Ashgabat to the village of Kipjak (where Niyazov was born), lends an image of development to the capital. It is largely a Potemkin image, however, as the repaving of roads ends where Niyazov's international visitors' route ends, and the beautiful gilded city gates leading out of the eastern side of Ashgabat (which Niyazov drives through on his way to work each morning) is not mirrored by a gate on the western side at all, which is in serious disrepair. The renaming of the streets after the new heroes of independent Turkmenistan furthers the concept of the new national hero (as part of the nationalist historiography) that was introduced in the previous chapter.

The displacement of many residents is a tragic by-product of the capital revitalization. In order to expand the roadways and construct grand entrance gates for the capital, families are moved and their homes demolished to make room for the new developments. BBC reported, "Many of the families forced to leave their homes in this way are not offered compensation or alternative accommodation because they cannot prove their title to their original dwellings."[66]

Ashgabat's streetplan is an example of an axial plan that directs people to a goal—the squares and buildings in the city centre that represent the power of the president. This power is visually depicted by the monumental architecture of the central squares and the capitol buildings.

Central Squares: Presidential Square and Neutrality Square

Town planning generally centres around city squares, and Ashgabat's has changed significantly since independence. The city centre, formerly Karl Marx

[66] S. Ingram, "Turkmenistan's Gilded Poverty," BBC online edition, www.bbc.co.uk, 2000

Square (also known as *Azadi* square), today is broken into two adjacent squares—Presidential Square and Neutrality Square—which contain the capitol complex and a monumental area. In the period since 1991, Niyazov has demolished most of the old buildings from these squares (although he retained the Karl Marx Library), and constructed a new presidential palace, government rostrum, and many new monuments. Construction of these squares has entailed an enlargement in scope of surrounding buildings and structures, the creation of new building facades for the buildings around the squares, and the broadening of streets.

The city has largely been restructured around these squares. Buildings of low value were demolished in the city centre, and small blocks of houses were abolished. New arterial roads were broken from the centre: Bitarap Turkmenistan Shayoly leads to the new airport terminal complex; Galkynysh Shayoly—to the east of the city; Garashsyzlyk Shayoly—to the south towards the hotel complexes in Berzengi district. These major roads, along with a large complex of governmental office buildings in the centre, have imparted a metropolitan feel to the city.

Presidential Square

Visitors to Ashgabat are immediately aware of where power is centred—Presidential Square, the newly-refurbished central square in the capital—catches the eye of any passer-by with its huge, neo-classical Presidential Palace, massive parade lanes, and marble and gold finishing. Presidential Square is an area that is meant to visually display the wealth and power of Niyazov—from the ubiquitous patrolling guards to the spotlessness of the walkways. Presidential Square, which stretches north to south along the parade lane, and borders the Presidential Palace to the east, Rukhyyet Palace to the south, and the governmental rostrum to the west, is home to the capitol complex. The north side of the square opens to the central esplanade and is

spatially connected with Neutrality Square's earthquake monument and Arch of Neutrality.

Architecturally, the Presidential Palace dominates the square—the entrance portico with a main staircase is the planning axis of the square—this is stressed by its arrangement in the centre of a fountain and the division of the square by different types of road surfacing. Access roads lead into the square for ceremonial purposes from Galkynysh and Karl Marx streets. The pavement covering the square is granite block and has different patterns and colours—light gray granite in the form of square netting and lines of white stones. It is surrounded by trees and greenery, as well as fountains and pools. The parade lane around which the square is constructed is 30 meters wide and allows all ceremonial events to take place against the backdrop of the Presidential Palace.

The governmental rostrum is a decorative viewing platform, a space for government officials and the president to sit during the ritual parades and ceremonies that take place in the Presidential Square. The rostrum, which is marble and mirrors the Presidential Palace, is an oblong single storied façade with no hind premises—this expands the space of the square. Its design—a centric composition edifice—has a two-storied central area for the positioning of the governmental box and lateral single-storied galleries. Again, the rostrum functions not only to visually demonstrate the president's power, but to create a theatre out of the square area—providing, in effect, a seating area for the administration to take in displays of obedience from its citizenry.

Ashgabat's capitol complex falls neatly into Presidential Square and comprises the Presidential Palace, the Rukhyyet Palace, and the governmental rostrum, along with the ceremonial parade route that opens onto Neutrality Square.

All of this has been constructed in the period following independence and it should be seen as a showing of power by Niyazov, who wishes to emphasize his power and grandeur. As Vale writes, government buildings are "necessarily infused with symbolism and are revealing cultural products."[67] The plot for the capitol complex falls within the borders of Galkynysh Shayoly (formerly Atabayev), Bitarap Turkmenistan Shayoly (formerly Podvoiski), and Karl Marx Street, embracing the historical centre of the city from the pre-Soviet time (Refer to Appendix C for photographs and diagrams depicting the central squares).

Presidential Palace

Glenn notes, "much about the nature of political power in any society, especially the relationship of the ruler to the people and where his power is thought to originate, can be discerned by looking at the physical symbols it produces in its architecture."[68] The Presidential Palace, where the offices of the President are located, serves as the city core and figures prominently in the Presidential Square design. Previously the central square contained no capitol buildings, so the construction of the Presidential Palace can be seen as a demonstration of power by a new regime. The Presidential Palace is Ashgabat's highest building in the city centre—its spire and dome dominate the skyline. The former Central Committee building had these elements as well, surely an influence upon the design decisions. The palace has a centric composition, with the main entrance facing the square, and the back side facing a large garden with pools and fountains. The building is constructed of white marble and gold domes—Esenow highlights that it is "plain in volume, restrained décor, proportionality of building's parts as a whole, originality and elegant

[67] Vale, 11
[68] Glenn, 44

silhouette."[69]

The massive golden dome of the Presidential Palace distinguishes it as the focal point of the city's centre. Thomas Markus writes, "it is precisely because a circular, domed building is a celebration of a rather unique kind of a holiday from the ubiquitous grid that it is so memorable and striking."[70] Although other capital buildings are domed in Ashgabat—including the Rukhyyet Palace described below, this huge gilded dome stands out among the other government buildings. Combined with its location at the epicentre of the central squares, the architecture of the palace's exterior and its landscaping leave no room for questions about where power is located in contemporary Ashgabat. All eyes are drawn to the offices of the president.

Rukhyyet Palace

The southern part of Presidential Square, facing towards the Kopetdag mountains, is closed by Rukhyyet Palace—another large domed building where the parliamentary bodies meet. Rukhyyet Palace borders three streets, and in the plans parts of the building were higher even than the Presidential Palace. Esenow writes that, "to some extent the building in the striking volume and length prevails in the space of the city centre."[71] The building is flanked by the Palace of Fairness (the new name for the Ministry of Justice) and the Ministry of Defence, which enhance its centric composition. The building's solemn nature, and its supposed social significance are architecturally accentuated by the building's raising on a high stylobate. The building was constructed by the French firm Bouygues, a selection that underscores Niyazov's desire to build an internationally designed neo-classical

[69] Esenow, 95
[70] Thomas A. Markus, "What Do Domes Mean?", 3
[71] Esenow, 96

structure.[72] A smooth ascent starts on the pavement of Galkynysh Street by the main entrance in the centre and lateral wings, and ends with broad flights of stairs approaching the entrance.[73] Openness prevails in the building's architecture. The front is covered with column intervals and an open column wing with a small dome. Architectural restraint is evident through the intervals of columns—which produce a reiterating rhythm. The cornice, crowned by expressive entablature, coordinates with the basic element of the square and capitol complex—the Presidential Palace. At the same time the form of the dome, partition of the drum and the architectural ornament to some extent almost precisely repeat the method applied in the building of the Presidential Palace, causing a certain uniformity that brings the square together visually.

Neutrality Square and its Monuments

Neutrality Square provides an excellent architectural segue into discussion of national monuments, as it contains two of the city's most distinctive new monuments—the Arch of Neutrality and the earthquake victims' memorial. The square itself is connected to Presidential Square and covers the plot of the old Karl Marx Square beside the National Library. The main part of the square contains the Arch of Neutrality and fountains, and it is connected via underground passageway to the earthquake victims' memorial and the museum of Ashgabat. Surrounding buildings have been architecturally renewed—fitted with white marble faces and glazed with toned glass, and the pavement is made of special tiles with different patterns and colours.

During the Soviet era, this section of the main square contained a small

[72] Article, "V Turkmenistane budut postroyeny dvorets…" *Neytralnyy Turkmenistan* 22 January 1998
[73] Esenow, 96

collection of five graves, those of famous Soviet heroes from Turkmenistan. These included at least one First Secretary and, according to legend, the first woman to publicly burn her *yashmak* in Turkmenistan.[74] In the late 1990s, these were moved without notice to an undisclosed location to make room for the newest monument to independent Turkmenistan—the Arch of Neutrality.[75]

The Arch of Neutrality is the finalizing element in the architectural-spatial composition of Ashgabat city centre. Spatially, it takes the main point of the city centre, fixing the intersection of two perpendicular west-east axes (Neutrality Square—esplanade—memorial—2nd World War memorial) and the starting point of spatial development of the centre northward (Arch of Neutrality—parade lane—Bitarap Turkmenistan Street).[76] The Arch of Neutrality was constructed in 1997 following the December 1995 UN resolution declaring permanent neutrality for Turkmenistan. The design of the Arch of Neutrality, which holds some resemblance to the Eiffel Tower, was the result of a design competition held between 1995 and 1996 in Turkmenistan. Its upper levels are formed by the combination of horizontal circles-tiers, the diameters of which gradually reduce in height. Supporting vertical ribs that are stabilizing features narrow as the circular tiers get smaller.

The legs of the towers are decorated with copper engravings depicting events in the history of Turkmenistan. Additionally, round bas-relief strips on the legs depict carpet patterns of the five major tribes in Turkmenistan—the same carpet patterns depicted on Turkmenistan's flag.[77] The monument has several viewing platforms, that can be reached by two funiculars which ascend on the pylon's ribs to the first level, and a panoramic elevator that takes visitors to an upper viewing deck, which also has

[74] For a description of the cultural significance of *yashmak* in Turkmenistan, refer to Chapter 3.
[75] J. Kelley, *The Ashgabat Gazette: A Virtual Tour of Turkmenistan,* Issue 45 (1999)
[76] Esenow, 97
[77] Author's observations, Ashgabat, November 2003

a poorly-stocked and under-staffed bar/restaurant area.[78] The total height of the arch is 75 meters, and the highest viewing gallery is at 29.5 meters. Atop the Arch of Neutrality is a rotating golden statue of Niyazov, which makes a full circle on its axis each day, so that the face of the president—with his arms outstretched—is always facing the sun (See Appendix C for photographs of Ashgabat's monuments).

The earthquake memorial, which stands in the very centre of Ashgabat and stands on top of a museum commemorating the rebuilding of Ashgabat after the earthquake, is an intriguing statue. The statue represents a bull with his back arched holding a globe upon his horns—representing the jostling of the world in the time of the 1948 earthquake. This representation draws upon an historic Turkmen legend which posited that the earth rests upon a sleeping bull, which periodically wakes, causing the earth to shake. A figure of Gurbansoltan Eje, Niyazov's mother who perished in the earthquake, sits atop the globe, holding in outstretched arms a golden statue of a baby—her son Saparmurat, who she offers to the country. The golden figure of Niyazov, which faces the Arch of Neutrality, is visually depicted as a leader not only with mortal powers, but one almost religious in his rise from the natural disaster and human tragedy. The eye is immediately drawn to the figure of the baby Niyazov due to the contrast in colouring (Appendix C).

Ruhnama Park and the Monument to Independence

On each anniversary of Turkmenistan's independence, the regime has decreed the construction of a new memorial to commemorate the steps that the country has taken in the post-Soviet period. Referred to by residents by their appearances—for example, "three-legs", "five legs" and "eight legs" (three legs being the monument to

[78] Author's observation, Ashgabat, October-November 2004

the third anniversary of independence, which is a tower resting atop three pillar-like legs, five legs the fifth anniversary monument with five supporting pillars, and so on), these monuments form central elements of parks and squares across the city. The most recent creation in Ashgabat is the Ruhnama Park of Saparmurat Turkmenbashy the Great. It is a giant statue of the book *Ruhnama,* which opens on national holidays to reveal holographic pictures of the president and national historical heroes.

Perhaps the most significant of the independence monuments is the so-called Monument to Turkmenistan's Independence, situated in its own Park of Independence, next to the park honouring the tome *Ruhnama* in the southern outskirts of the city on the road to the Berzengi district. The independence monument was constructed in 1993 on the second anniversary of Turkmenistan's independence and has become an icon of Ashgabat, appearing on stamps, postcards, notebooks and other Ashgabat souvenirs, as well as on billboards and television programs as a backdrop for Niyazov's speaking appearances. The monument is comprised of a hemispherical foundation that it 60 meters in diameter, upon which a 95-meter-high column stands with a flagstaff and a Presidential standard. The monument has a sighting terrace inside, which can be reached via an elevator. There are five main entrances, each marked by a sculpture of an historical hero of Turkmenistan—Oghuz Han, Gorogly, Gorkut Ata, and Magtumguly are represented, although with some of the major pre-Soviet literary figures and some of the Seljuk sultans. A north-south ceremonial lane commences on the main arterial road, the 10 Years of Welfare Street—and leads to the monument, and this road is marked by a grand golden sculpture of Niyazov sitting on top of an octagonal fountain. A fountain and a circle for mass performances complete the park—the performance circle has a six-meter high collapsible stage and 2500 open-air seats (Appendix C).

The construction of the Ruhnama Park and the Monument to Independence (and the surrounding statues, fountains, and park area) serve an important function for the cult of personality: they further infuse Niyazov's portrait and the image of his book into the personal lives of his citizens. In Turkmenistan, couples follow the Soviet traditions of photography during wedding ceremonies at landmarks and monuments around their city that are significant and beautiful. In post-Soviet Turkmenistan, the monuments to Turkmenbashy, the Neutrality monuments and the Ruhnama monument are all among the favourite places for wedding photography. As a result, countless couples throughout Ashgabat have Niyazov's image and his book's intertwined with their marriage festivities. Additionally, citizens from across Turkmenistan, when visiting the capital, tour the monuments of Turkmenbashy as part of their visit, taking photographs and absorbing the cult of personality—a visit to the capital is almost a pilgrimage taken to the shrine of their living ruler. And finally, on weekend days in Turkmenistan, citizens flock to the parks and fountains to cool down, stroll on the paths, and play with their children, and so the landscape created by the regime works itself into the very patterns of daily life.

Religious Architecture

Sultanistic and personalistic regimes have historically often used religion or religious iconography to support their leadership. Earlier discussions of political religion speak to this, but it is a phenomenon that finds a great deal of resonance in consideration of the regime's architectural undertakings as well. Construction of religious shrines, churches, mosques and temples on a large scale, as well as employment of religious art in sculpture, fountains, and official ceremonies, is common among many personalist leaders.

Niyazov takes pride in the gifts he bestows upon his population, and since independence, he has given new mosque buildings to many cities throughout Turkmenistan. The construction of a massive mosque at Goktepe as part of the memorial for those who died during the Russian conquest was part of this project. The capstone of this project of mosque construction was the creation of the mosque at Kipjak village, Niyazov's birthplace, outside of Ashgabat.

At the site of the old fortress at Goktepe where the Turkmen were defeated by General Skobelev and the Russian troops in 1881, a large mosque known as the Memorial Saparmurat-Haji Mosque was constructed. In a 1993 Presidential decree "On Perpetuation of the Blessed Memory of the Perished in Goktepe Battle for the Independence of the Turkmen People", Niyazov outline the goal of spiritual revival and the return of cultural and spiritual values to the nation. A year later, the resolution, "On the Construction of Goktepe Mosque and a Fortress Wall" outlined the plans for the construction of the mosque at the old battle site. Because this was the first mosque to be built since independence in Turkmenistan, there was little domestic experience with the construction of religious edifices. Therefore, the architects turned to the scheme of Turkish mosques built in the Osman style, and reshaped this style taking into consideration local building materials and the town-planning situation.[79] The two Turkmen architects, a husband and wife team Durly and Kakajan Durdyew from the Politeknik Institute, were joined by a French architect from the Bouygues firm, and the construction costs reached about $50 million.[80]

The architecture of the façade is festive, with "arched apertures and gently sloping curvature. Colour tones harmonize with generally-accepted architectonics of the edifice… secular principles prevail in the architectural image of the building,

[79] *ibid.*, 389
[80] Author's interviews with groundskeepers, Goktepe, November 2004

instead of religious closeness and mass typical to the primary image."[81] The mosque has a centre dome about 40 meters high, with four minarets that are each 60 meters high in the outer corners. Like many mosques, Goktepe's is non-axial—that is, without any dominant orientation, which generally denotes equality before the divine.[82] This message is somewhat undermined by the presence of copies of *Ruhnama* at the front of the mosque, which stresses that none are equal politically to Niyazov. A high elliptical dome replaced the original hemispherical flat dome. There is a belt of windows under the dome, around the sides of the mosque and a turquoise coloured facing of the dome that adds lightness to the building's appearance. The mosque consists of two parts—a central hall under the dome that has 500 seats for worshippers and an adjoining open rectangular yard that is surrounded by an arched gallery with square columns. A large chandelier, weighing two tons and holding 216 lights,[83] illuminates the hall's spacious interior. The total capacity of the mosque is said to be 12,000 worshippers (including both the mosque and the madrassa).[84] Interestingly, the materials for the mosque are mainly imported from Europe—the dome is from Germany, and the marble used in constructed is imported from Italy, Spain and France (Appendix C).[85]

To replace a small mosque (the Saparmurat Turkmenbashy Mosque) that was constructed in 1994 in Niyazov's home village of Kipjak outside of Ashgabat, a massive mosque, considered the largest in Central Asia, was constructed in 2004 in the same village. It has four 90-meter high minarets. Built by the French company Bouygues, the mosque was inaugurated with great pomp on 22 October 2004. It has the capacity to hold 10,000 worshippers and it was constructed at a reported cost of

[81] Esenow, 390
[82] Glenn, 27
[83] Author's interview, Goktepe, November 2004
[84] Author's interviews, Goktepe, November 2004
[85] Author's interviews, Goktepe, November 2004

$100 million. Kipjak, a small village, does not have the population to support such a large number of worshippers, and the mosque is used more frequently for official visits and functions than for religious services, although in the future it may become more functional.[86]

The architecture of this mosque strongly reflects the regime's personalism. On the minarets, in place of Koranic quotations, are lines from the presidential tome Ruhnama.[87] The reflecting gardens surrounding the religious edifice are dedicated to the memory of the President's parents. The mosque itself has been decorated with quotations from the *Ruhnama* and up to a quarter of the book stands in the mosque meant for copies of the Koran are filled with presidential publications, including *Ruhnama*. A copy of *Ruhnama* is placed prominently at the entrance to each of Turkmenistan's mosques, and believers are expected to touch it as if it was a sacred object. The Kipjak mosque stirred some controversy in the Muslim communities because of the decoration with *Ruhnama* quotations. To enter the mosque through the main door, visitors walk through a gateway over which is written (in Turkmen) "Ruhnama is a holy book; The Koran is Allah's book". On one side of the gate is the text of the oath of allegiance to the president, carved in stone, and on the other is the text of the national anthem.

Niyazov's religious architecture represents some interesting elements of his power propagation. First, Niyazov distinctly separates himself from the Soviet leaders (and indeed, from his former role as a Soviet leader) by welcoming the new role for Islam in his country and co-opting religious elites, allowing only a state-sponsored version of Islam to operate. This complements his cult of personality particularly

[86] Author's observations, Kipjak mosque, November 2004
[87] This has drawn some outcry from religious groups outside of Turkmenistan and even, reportedly, some limited dissent inside the country. Author's observations and informal interviews, Kipjak and Ashgabat, November 2004

because it presents another alternative to Soviet ideology in the post-Soviet ideological vacuum, but one that is under the control of the state and therefore (at least for now) does not represent a threat to Niyazov. Images of Niyazov in Islamic dress, undertaking the *hajj* to Mecca, and praying during religious ceremonies at the mosques he constructs, all help to support and legitimize his rule—as mentioned in Chapter 4, a sort of political religion has taken hold in independent Turkmenistan.

Niyazov is further able to infuse his personalism and his pseudo-ideological program *Ruhnama* into the new religious architecture, which allows for a legitimation of the cult of personality and a greater acceptance of Niyazov as a leader. Citizens are grateful for the gifts of new mosques given to their villages by Niyazov and many overlook the *Ruhnama* quotations engraved upon the minarets. Religious leaders, appointed by the government and subject to official review and dismissal, read from the *Ruhnama* during their services. Niyazov's portrait hangs in many mosque entrances, and his name is given to the mosques, and the mere fact of mosque construction in his birthplace of Kipjak is an example of an entrenchment of the cult—one that strikingly resembles the basilica construction in the Ivory Coast.

In addition, Niyazov hopes to enhance his international image as a religious leader through the construction of these grandiose religious buildings. The mosque in Kipjak, for example, was for a time only opened to foreign guests and not local believers—the construction project was intended to serve as a conduit for Niyazov to become one of the world's sponsors of large scale Islamic building projects.

Berzengi Development

The development of the Berzengi neighbourhood is an undertaking that reflects Niyazov's attempt to construct an international image for Ashgabat.

Berzengi—the more modern, and newly constructed, southern quarter of Ashgabat, has hotels and gleaming buildings which "considerably improved the receptive capacity" of Ashgabat, "adapting it to international standards."[88] Hoping that international investors and traders would flock to Ashgabat in the post-Soviet period to make a bid for his country's natural resources, Niyazov set out to construct a world-class area of luxury hotels, restaurants and conference facilities so that his oil and gas rich nation would become something of a new Dubai. The result has been the construction of a strip of hotels that resembles Las Vegas in colour and scale. Ironically, however, most stand empty because investors and tourists alike have been deterred from visiting due to harsh visa regimes and a shadow economy that makes business dealings for Westerners in Turkmenistan unprofitable.

During the Soviet period, Ashgabat had only a few low-level hotels. On the 26th of February 1992 Niyazov invited the heads of each of the ministries within the government to a meeting and charged each man with the design of one hotel complex, to be erected at the minister's own expense, in the southern part of Ashgabat at the foothills of the Kopetdag mountains. Esenow, the national architect, oversaw construction of each hotel to ensure that design and documentation was sound. Local ministers, who previously operated under a system of Soviet central planning, had little experience in building design. Sites for the construction of the hotels were provided and prepared by the Khyakimlik of Ashgabat (the mayoral staff, or city executive committee), often at great expense to residents in that area, who were cleared from their homes and relocated (often at their own expense) while their buildings were demolished.

Presidential rules mandated certain design elements—for example, each of the

[88] "Ashgabat," available online at www.turkmenistan.it/asgabatgb.html

hotels was required to have a light marble façade. The hotels are placed equidistant from the highway and the complexes were required to embrace a "yard theme," with fountains to enrich the architectural space. Each hotel complex consists of ten rooms, two luxury apartments, and many services, such as swimming pools and restaurants. The designers of the hotels best loved by Niyazov were awarded the Magtumguly International Prize in 1994 for architectural achievements. As of autumn 1999, there were 25 new hotels in the Berzengi neighbourhood (Appendix C).[89]

The hotels, which look very futuristic and stand, fresh and bright white, in contrast to the desert space they inhabit, stand vacant for the most part, with occasional occupancy during energy conventions. Berzengi hotels each feature expensive restaurants and fitness centres which are generally unused—there might be, on a given night, ten waiters for each table in an Italian restaurant.[90] Restaurateurs and hoteliers have been selected from Milan and other parts of Europe at the president's request to establish hotel-restaurants in some of the Berzengi developments.[91] These restaurants are generally only visited by government officials, the occasional diplomat or visitor, and conference attendees. Ashgabat, by the end of the 1990s, was well-prepared for a business and tourism boom that is yet to come.

Conclusion

Power can be propagated in many ways—architecture, and the political use of public space, can be one of the more outward expressions of governance. Particularly in capital cities and complexes of government buildings, but also in monumental architecture and grandiose building projects, new regimes can underscore their

[89] Kelley, Issue 68
[90] Author's observations and informal interviews, Ashgabat—Berzengi Presidential Hotel, November 2004
[91] For example, the Nisa hotel and the Presidential hotel are managed by an Italian team and feature Italian cuisine at the personal request of the president.

authority and push that authority into the public view, becoming a part of a citizen's everyday living experience and thereby establishing itself as the overarching, far-reaching power.

Turkmenistan's capital architecture has changed significantly, and several times, since Ashgabat's founding as a military outpost—but in all cases the changes directly represented the regime charged with the rebuilding and the construction. When Ashgabat was first settled, it was a Russian colonial outpost through and through—from the officer's houses to the bazaars catering to the needs of the new soldiers, and with little to no native presence. Under the Soviets, and particularly after the catastrophic earthquake in the 1940s, the city was rebuilt as a model Soviet city—with mikrorayons, canteens and shopping centres, monuments to Soviet heroes, and the Karl Marx library which became a hallmark of the new style of Soviet architecture.

In the post-Soviet period, Ashgabat has undergone yet another facelift. Niyazov's regime, determined to drastically change Ashgabat's aesthetic to make it represent the regime's outward face, has undertaken huge construction projects, employing foreign firms and using imported materials to create entirely new city centre squares, parks and monuments, religious buildings, and tourism complexes. While the development of the country has not matched in pace or expense the development of the capital's aesthetic, and the regions continue to suffer from an absence of new development and the continuing, and increasingly rapid, deterioration of Soviet-era buildings and edifices, Turkmenistan's citizens generally take pride in the beautification of Ashgabat and see Ashgabat as a symbol of the path of development for Turkmenistan. In this way, the regime's employment of the Ashgabat reconstruction as an instrument of power propagation has been a successful

undertaking.

Ashgabat's facelift again likens Niyazov's regime to other sultanistic regimes and personalist regimes throughout the world, and namely those that emerged in postcolonial Africa. In his rebuilding and redesign of the national capital, Niyazov—like other sultanistic rulers-- has actually infused himself into the capital design. From ubiquitous portraits to countless gilded statues, Niyazov has become almost a theme of the capital. By inserting himself this way into the daily experience of his citizens through the structural imposition of his image into their lives, Niyazov gains both a familiarity and an immortality that is a trademark of a sultanistic regime.

CONCLUSION

REGIME DYNAMICS AND PATHS OUT OF SULTANISM

This thesis outlines the major strategies employed by sultanistic leaders as part of their legitimating discourses. It examines the ways in which leaders—specifically, Turkmenistan's Niyazov—use regime symbol and ritual, national narratives, and public space to propagate doctrines of legitimation intended to produce a domain consensus among his population, or at least to secure normative compliance. Through pointed references to legitimation methods under African cases of sultanistic leadership, the thesis situates Turkmenistan's contemporary regime in a context that allows for historical analysis. This study is intended to further the cross-regional comparisons between Central Asia and post-colonial sub-Saharan Africa, in order to provide a basis for analysis and prognosis for contemporary Central Asian states.

In many ways, the methods of legitimation employed by Niyazov's regime in Turkmenistan approximate the examples found among the historical cases of sultanism in sub-Saharan Africa. Through symbols and rituals of dominance, historiographies that fuse nationalism with cults of leadership, and architectural endeavours that lend an element of material permanence to the regime's undertakings, sultanistic regimes in both regions forge their rule using many of the same tools and methods. Some of the similarities are striking and exact, while others allow only general comparisons, but the comparisons seem salient. Despite variance in demography, environment, history, and culture, these leaders have a common mode of producing normative compliance.

Turkmenistan's Legitimation Campaign

This thesis has attempted to locate Turkmenistan in a comparative context, to examine the role of pseudo-ideology in legitimation of sultanistic regimes, and to

examine different aspects of the legitimation process. Propaganda and political legitimation in Turkmenistan present a fascinating area of study due to the pervasiveness of the official propaganda—nearly all of the information forwarded in Turkmenistan through educational and media outlets in some way reflects the interests of the regime and Niyazov's program of *Ruhnama*.

The first three chapters introduce the case of Turkmenistan with reference to the body of literature on personalist regimes that emerged from the studies of post-colonial Africa. Turkmenistan's regime differs enough from other post-Soviet regimes (with the possible exceptions of Belarus and Azerbaijan) that it serves to consider it apart from those cases and, in particular, to consider it using the literature on similar historical regimes. Africanists have developed a rich literature concerning post-colonial personalism that draws on Weberian concepts of legitimate authority, a literature that speaks well to scholars of personal regimes in Central Asia.

Enough similarities exist across the cases to consider these regimes with reference to one another, and enough historical and contextual similarities exist between the regions to provide an interesting comparison that lends insight as to the factors that contribute to the rise of sultanistic leadership. Rule by colonial powers—and similarities in the type of and length of imperial domination—may be a contributing factor to the rise of dysfunctional authority. Both the European powers in Africa and the Russians and Soviets in Central Asia left a legacy of bureaucratic authoritarianism under which the leaders of the independence generation were cultivated. Though differences are clear, dysfunctions in post-colonial authority and leadership in this thesis exemplify the many similarities in the post-colonial experiences of the two regions.

At its core, however, this is a study of Turkmenistan's current regime, and the

benchmark concept of sultanism is a useful starting place for its consideration. Sultanism, the most obviously personalist of the types of non-democratic rule, seems to better describe Niyazov's regime than does the concept of authoritarianism. Niyazov's regime entirely undercuts pluralism, allows no room for political mobilization (or even for non-official civic mobilization), and exhibits strong leader-centric tendencies. Most interesting for the purposes of this thesis, Niyazov's program of *Ruhnama* very closely mirrors Chehabi and Linz's description of a sultanistic "pseudo-ideology."

Sultanistic regimes, Chehabi and Linz write, are not characterized by pervasive ideologies of a totalitarian type, nor with a set of "mentalities" like authoritarian regimes, but rather with by pseudo-ideologies, which are constructed in the aftermath of the regime's coming to power (and therefore have nothing to do with the rise to power itself, as is true of totalitarian ideologies). A pseudo-ideology is often considered to be mere "window dressing" for the regime but can be all pervasive, is closely intertwined with the personality of the leader himself, and often bears his name.

In Turkmenistan, *Ruhnama* exhibits many of these characteristics. Since the publication of the book of the same name, *Ruhnama* has become the catch-all for Niyazov's earlier projects of national revival and nationalist historiography, and has also become a convenient vehicle to further propagate Niyazov's cult of personality. Chapter four laid out many of these qualities and also juxtaposed Niyazov's national program atop Mobutu's programs of Authenticity and *Mobutuisme* in Zaire. A comparison of sultanistic pseudo-ideology in these two states demonstrates many strong similarities between the cases on the level of legitimation—studies of Mobutu's methods of propaganda speak volumes as to Niyazov's manoeuvring in the

contemporary period. Like Mobutu, Niyazov has taken control of the state's educational and media outlets, turning them into vehicles of *Ruhnama* and channels for official ritual and symbolism.

The revision of the national narrative and writing of a nationalist historiography that fits Niyazov neatly into the centre of history and at the pinnacle of his nation's achievements is a striking element of Niyazov's campaign of propaganda. Many chapters of his expansive volumes of *Ruhnama* are dedicated to an exploration of Turkmenistan's history, genealogies of the Turkmen ancestors, and mythical musings about the origins of the Turkmen people and the glorious golden ages of the past. History combines with fantasy as Niyazov recounts ancestors appearing in his dreams, speaking to him from the skies, and calling him to lead the Turkmen into the next golden age. All of this is part of a comprehensive campaign of national history revision that closely resembles (in style if not in content) the revisions of national history in other parts of the world—and particularly under sultanistic regimes emerging from colonial situations. African sultans, like Niyazov, are careful in their nationalist historiographies to place themselves squarely at the centre of events, to make themselves necessary to realizing the dreams of the nation's ancestors. Niyazov's accounts, which have become the only accounts allowed inside Turkmenistan, of the country's history notably miss the period of Soviet rule, discount the role of Turkmen in the colonial apparatus, and deny the existence of tribalism in Turkmen society. Through the elevation of national heroes of the past (and, by association, of himself in the present), Niyazov not only raises himself to the level of national icon but also presents traits of the culture that are to be mirrored by good citizens.

Architecture and urban design, finally, have become a physical representation

of the sultanistic legitimation campaign. From capital relocation to capitol building redesign, sultanistic leaders seize on the post-colonial moment to capture the design of their nation's centre city for themselves. By inserting themselves into every part of the physical environment—with billboards, posters, statues and monuments bearing their names and faces—these leaders are able to construct a public environment that leaves no question as to the sources of power and its personification in the president. Architectural endeavours can speak volumes as to the location of power in a particular polity, and this is also true (and sometimes drastically so) in sultanistic regimes that emerge in a post-colonial context. Colonial architecture is often rejected in the wake of independence, and oftentimes capital cities are moved, or old buildings razed and rebuilt, to reflect not only the fact of regime change but also the personal style and preferences of the new regime.

Utility of the Sultanistic Regime Typology

Although Niyazov's regime does not adhere perfectly to the ideal-typical sultanistic regime as defined by Linz and Chehabi, sultanism does appear to provide a very useful benchmark from which to assess developments under the post-Soviet regime in Turkmenistan. Niyazov's Turkmenistan appears to appromiximate—in style of governance and methods of legitimation—various examples of sultanistic governance throughout the post-colonial space, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. In fact, cases of sultanism in Africa—described in detail in this thesis—lend greater insight into the Turkmen case than do studies of other Central Asian countries, which share Turkmenistan's location and Soviet experience—for example, Kyrgyzstan.

There are other examples of regimes that approximate sultanism in the post-Soviet space, for example Lukashenko's Belarus or Aliev's Azerbaijan (an excellent example of dynastic succession). In fact, it is interesting to note that of the major

post-Soviet regions, the three most explicit examples of personalist rule appear to come from three different regions—Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Uzbekistan under Islom Karimov is the Central Asian case most similar in governance to Niyazov's Turkmenistan, although differences in the style of regime—including the broader governing coalition in Uzbekistan—are salient. Although this thesis did not explicitly examine similarities in circumstance among the post-Soviet sultanistic cases, such a comparison would be an open avenue for future research on the subject of sultanism and personalist rule and would provide an interesting window into the comparative politics of post-Soviet regimes.

Paths Out of Sultanistic Regimes

Over the past year, three of the former Soviet states—Ukraine, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan, experienced revolutions—from their initial post-Soviet phase into a new period that might show greater steps towards democratization. In the aftermath of Kyrgyzstan's so-called Tulip Revolution, many asked if Kyrgyzstan was just the first Central Asian domino to fall—if revolution and democratization there would spill over to its neighbours, for example, to Turkmenistan. Research points to a simple answer: no—although the reasons are many and complex. Turkmenistan's current regime is very different from the former regime of Kyrgyzstan's Akaev, and is more like Belarus' Lukashenko or Azerbaijan's former President Haidar Aliev, both of whose countries (and Aliev's son's regime) showed remarkable resistance to any sort of spillover from Ukraine and Georgia in their respective regions.[1] Additionally, society in Turkmenistan, unlike in Kyrgyzstan, has shown little mobilization for political purposes in the post-Soviet period. Although Kyrgyzstan's society was

[1] Eke, S. and T. Kuzio, "Sultanism in Eastern Europe: The Socio-Political Roots of Authoritarian Populism in Belarus," *Europe-Asia Studies* 52(3):660-700 (2000)

considered politically passive in the 1990s, a strong north-south divide, ethnic hostilities, and the reaction provoked by the government's attack on protestors in the Kerben and Jalal-abad regions over the past several years have prompted increased mobilization. In Turkmenistan, as we have seen, domestic mobilization is very low.

One of the most useful aspects of a comparative approach to studies of political regimes is the element of prediction—by studying patterns of behaviour and leadership that occurred in the past, perhaps we can foresee potential outcomes for the future. Embedded within every state "is the latent possibility of deflation of its power and authority, of loss of its legitimacy, of decay of its institutional structure."[2] Because the cases of African sultanism are historical, their experiences with transition might lend some insight to the potential for transition from sultanism in Turkmenistan. The African cases experienced various types of transitions away from sultanism. Africa has experienced revolutions, bloodless coups, and peaceful handovers of power. In some cases, there has been dynastic succession following a leader's natural death. African sultanistic regimes have experienced many different types of transition; notably, however, none of these cases experienced a transition to a democratic regime.

Variables for Comparing Potential Outcomes of Transition

Richard Snyder has written on the potential outcomes of transition from neopatrimonial dictatorships—many of which are cases of sultanism—mainly in Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia. He analyses three important variables across the cases: "the institutional autonomy of the military, the strategies and relative organizational strengths of moderate groups opposed to the dictator, and

[2] Crawford Young and Thomas Turner, *The Rise and Decline of the Zairian State* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), p. 6

the strategies and relative organizational strengths of revolutionary groups opposed to the dictator."[3] These take the form of three critical relationships: the relationship between the ruler and the military, the relationship between the ruler and domestic elites, and the relationship of domestic actors (be they the military, the rulers, or the opposition groups) to foreign powers.

- **Relationships with the military.** Military relations are important to analyse because of the high incidence of military coups in overtaking neopatrimonial regimes historically. Snyder writes, "the degree to which the ruler has undermined the autonomy of the armed forces (for example, by subverting their organizational hierarchy and replacing it with a hierarchy based on loyalty to his person and by dividing the officer corps) is a critical variable which differentiates the revolutionary and nonrevolutionary cases."[4] The military's level of autonomy includes its control over materiel supply, the officers' abilities to predict their career paths and communicate their discontent to one another, the "degree to which the officer corps is divided along ethnic or regional lines, and the dictator's capacity to purge elements of the armed forces whose loyalty he questions."[5]
- **Relationships with domestic elite.** The relationship between the ruler and the domestic elite is another important relationship in predicting transitional outcomes. The level of political exclusion often influences the levels and potential growth of revolutionary and moderate opposition. In some cases, however, where organization amongst domestic elites is low, the likelihood of revolutionary opposition will also be low. The level of repression internally

[3] Richard Snyder, "Explaining Transitions from Neopatrimonial Dictatorships," *Comparative Politics* 24(4): 379-399 (1992), p. 380
[4] *ibid.,* 380
[5] *ibid.*, 381

and the communication and unity of potential oppositional factions must also be considered, and in an intensely repressive situation with low organization, domestic elites may not be motivated to join the revolutionary or moderate opposition, or to form them.

- **Relationships with foreign powers.** The third factor examined by Snyder is the role of foreign powers. Foreign powers can strengthen to varying degrees the capacities of potential successors to capture state power in the event of regime transition, whether that successor be another dictator, the military, civilian moderates, or revolutionaries. Economic dependence of a sultanistic ruler on foreign powers may work for or against the sultan. Historically, many sultanistic regimes have fallen to revolutionary coups due to their excessive dependence on foreign economic aid, which is resented by members of the population. In other cases, however, "the extreme dependence of a neopatrimonial ruler on a foreign power does not necessarily encourage, and may even inhibit, revolution. The impact of extreme dependence on a single patron on the course of political development, while important, is mediated by the configuration of domestic actors (that is, the presence or absence of viable moderate opposition groups, the degree of military autonomy) and by the willingness of these domestic actors (especially the incumbent dictator) to participate in the schemes of foreign powers."[6] During the Cold War, especially, it was also possible for superpower patrons to actually inhibit the course of revolution by defusing crises that might provide avenues to power for oppositionist radicals.

  Snyder, writing in the early 1990s, highlighted Mobutu's Zaire as an instance

[6] *ibid.*, 385

of a sultanistic regime that was characterized—to that point—by political stability, and so he also suggests reasons for a lack of transition—or factors that might encourage longevity of the sultanistic regime. He writes,

> Mobutu's longevity is a consequence of the cooptation of elites, repression, and the exacerbation of ethnic and regional divisions by state patronage, all of which effectively inhibited the growth of radical and moderate opposition; the undermining of the armed forces' institutional autonomy; and his ability to extract vital military and economic assistance from foreign patrons while limiting the leverage these patron had over him by diversifying his sources of external support. As a result, would-be revolutionaries, moderate opponents, and the military were all similarly limited in their capacities to challenge Mobutu; hence *stasis*.[7]

Mobutu, like other sultanistic leaders, had an extensive patronage network binding elite members of the political class to the regime. Members of this elite stood to benefit from playing by Mobutu's rules, and so it was considered better to profit while possible and to assure one's family security when they would fall from power. Snyder writes, "In addition to inhibiting elite opposition, state patronage worked against the solidarity of opposition groups when they did arise by exacerbating regional and ethnic identities, thereby fragmenting civil society and impeding broad-based mobilization against Mobutu."[8] Mobutu, in his relationship with the military (he was formerly a military officer), effectively fostered and exploited rivalries among factions of officers, purged the officer corps frequently, maintained his supremacy of the military's command structure. Mobutu received vital financial assistance from a variety of foreign powers (including at various times China, France, Morocco, Belgium, North Korea, Egypt, Israel, South Africa, and the United States), and "was able to take advantage of the patronage of foreign powers without incurring the 'cost'

[7] *ibid.*, 392
[8] *ibid.*, 392

of extreme vulnerability to the policy preferences of a specific backer."[9]

In Turkmenistan, Niyazov has to a large extent undermined the autonomy of the military. Turkmenistan's military is poorly funded and trained, and very small, more ceremonial than functional. Niyazov has ordered military draftees to report for duty to regions away from their hometowns to further cut down on kinship- and clan-based patronage within the military structure. In place of the military, for the first decade of independence it appeared that Niyazov was relying heavily on the institution of the MNB, the national intelligence service. However, in 2002 the MNB was purged and Nazarov, then head of the MNB, was fired for shortcomings on the job—an unanticipated move that demonstrated Niyazov's continued control over that structure and his increasing paranoia about the potential for coups from within it. Niyazov now appears to rely to a large extent on his Presidential Guard instead of on the military or intelligence service, and his financing and support for this institution has also cut into the autonomy of the military.

It is not an invariable outcome of an exclusionary neopatrimonial regime that it will be toppled by a revolution. This was the case in Haiti under Baby Doc—"First, they (the regimes) do not necessarily confront significant revolutionary or moderate opposition. Organizational difficulties and effective state repression can block the emergence of potent opposition movements even in an exclusionary environment…. Second, even if radicals have not been killed and have been able to organize, they may choose not to pursue a strategy of armed confrontation."[10] Therefore, the fact that a sultanistic regime excludes elites from patronage benefits alone cannot be a predictor of whether the regime will move toward revolution, military coup, or transition to civilian rule. Below, Turkmenistan's potential for revolution or palace

[9] *ibid.*, 394
[10] *ibid.*, 383

coup will be considered as transition scenarios.

Certain sultanistic regimes are able to limit the influence of foreign powers by diversifying sources of aid and not exclusively relying on one foreign backer. Niyazov has taken a different approach with his policy of "positive neutrality"—avoiding regional entanglements and initiatives from Central Asian neighbours.[11] Niyazov has successfully played different states and organizations against each other. Russia is his most influential partner because almost all gas exports pass through its pipelines but its response to repeated humiliations of Russian government officials and overt discrimination against ethnic Russians has been remarkably weak. A few parliamentarians have spoken out against Niyazov but mostly the lure of cheap gas has kept Moscow silent about the worst abuses.

What Lies Ahead for Turkmenistan?

Consideration of the historical experiences of sultanistic regimes and their transitional periods allows for some informed speculation on the potential for transition away from sultanism in Turkmenistan. Given the nature of the Turkmen regime, of course, political prognoses are highly problematic. Niyazov holds significant levers of power—political, security and economic, and could stay in control for several years. But economic decline, growing dissatisfaction in society, and wider opposition both inside and outside the country make him much less secure. The danger of a palace coup, or an open explosion of popular frustration (perhaps aided from abroad), should not automatically be discounted. The African cases considered in this thesis experienced various types of transition, and it will be useful to outline some of the scenarios (and to assess their likelihood) in the case of

[11] Sally Cummings and Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: Saparmurat Niyazov's Inglorious Isolation," in Cummings, ed., *Power and Change in Central Asia* (London and New York, Routledge, 2002), p. 119

Turkmenistan.

- **Overthrow by Palace Coup.** This scenario seems unlikely for Turkmenistan due to the severe increase in government controls over officials in the aftermath of the 2002 assassination attempt, which would inhibit formation of a conspiracy within the presidential administration. Additionally, because of the huge rewards reaped by those in power, little incentive exists to attempt a coup because of the very high likelihood of failure. It is difficult to assess the level of elite dissent in Turkmenistan, although dissatisfaction did lead to a series of official defections (particularly among ambassadors) in 2000-2002. Movement of officials is more strictly controlled now, however, especially foreign travel. Also, officials are inhibited by the regimes' practice of taking revenge on family members left behind.
- **Externally Orchestrated Popular Revolution.** This scenario also seems highly unlikely in the case of Turkmenistan, due to low organizational potential and the serious isolation of the population. The repressive context makes it hard to assess the public mood; however, without real oppositional leadership within the country—or access to external opposition in exile through media or the Internet, it is difficult to imagine the orchestration of a popular revolt. Enough fear exists, and security presence is ubiquitous enough, to deter an uprising. Additionally, there are no real organizations—in religious or civil society—for people to coalesce around in opposition to the state, although there have been some recent reports of unofficial channels for Islamic believers in Turkmenistan.
- **Death and Succession.** There are some concerns about Niyazov's health, and even if he were to live another decade or more, he has stated plans to step

down in 2010. However, there is no precedent for real elections in Turkmenistan and there is no indication of who might be allowed to make a bid for the presidency. In the most likely case, Niyazov will retain official control as the head of the *Halk Maslehaty* and appoint a puppet president to serve as a figurehead. In the event then of Niyazov's death, the weak figurehead would be a vulnerable target for rivals. In the event of sudden death, without a consolidated political elite to pact a succession, there would be a high risk of violent struggle, increased by the fragmented nature of society. Another possibility is the emergence of a new dictator after some political struggle, who would adopt Niyazov's methods of control but would be more likely to resort to terror in the short term, given the absence of a cultivated personality cult. A peaceful transition might occur if agreements could be reached by the top officials who would all receive a share of the political prize—under this scenario, the personality cult would decline in importance although life for the average citizen would likely be similar. However, rivalry among the top players and the likelihood of intervention from exiled oppositionists make this peaceful pacting a more unlikely outcome. Any of these scenarios would probably draw in outside players, including Russia and the Turkmen diaspora.

- **Continuance of Niyazov's Rule.** The most likely scenario is perhaps the endurance, indefinitely, of Niyazov in the presidency. The isolation of rural masses who are increasingly uneducated, the balancing and co-opting of elites through fear and rewards, and the promised benefits of natural resource production all contribute to the security of the regime.

Turkmenistan seems set on a path of governance that leaves little hope for

political liberalization in the near-term. Snyder writes, "Direct leaps from neopatrimonialism to democracy are infrequent, and, consequently, the path of transition from neopatrimonialism that seems most likely in the short run is the continuation of nondemocratic rule in the form of either a military or a revolutionary dictatorship."[12] Given the historical experience of sultanistic regimes, then, it does not seem that democracy will be coming soon to Turkmenistan.

Continuance of Niyazov's rule will mean a prolonged crisis for Turkmenistan, with an increased potential for long-term social problems, a bloated and ineffective state bureaucracy, and serious economic decline. Already, poverty, unemployment, and the drastic changes to the systems of education and health care have brought about a decline in standards of living. Further rule by Niyazov has the potential to produce a dangerously isolated generation, unable to govern the country in a changing world. The state, which will be increasingly weak and dysfunctional, will continue to provide huge opportunities for large-scale corruption, potentially allowing criminal and terrorist organizations to act unhindered—Turkmenistan has already become a major drug transit state. Further decline will increase Turkmenistan's risk of becoming a failed state, posing a serious threat to regional and international interests and security.

[12] Snyder, 395

Appendices

APPENDIX A: Changing Media Symbolism—Front Pages of "Neytralnyy Turkmenistan (formerly Turkmenskaya Iskra) Newspaper

ЗДЕСЬ БРАТСТВО—ОБЫЧАЙ, И ДРУЖБА—ЗАКОН

Туркменская ИСКРА

РЕСПУБЛИКАНСКАЯ ЕЖЕДНЕВНАЯ ГАЗЕТА

№ 250 (19870). Воскресенье 27 октября 1991 г. Цена 10 коп.

Сегодня, в День рождения республики, внеочередная сессия Верховного Совета Туркменской ССР рассмотрит вопрос о независимости Туркменистана

С думой о будущем

Ашхабад

Красноводск

Да— Правде о человеке!

Figure 4: October 1991

С НОВЫМ ГОДОМ! 1995

Здесь братство - обычай и дружба - закон

Магтымгулы

Туркменская ИСКРА

Орган Кабинета Министров и Меджлиса Туркменистана

Издается с ноября 1924 года № 1 (20922) Воскресенье, 1 января 1995 г. Цена 50 тенге

В новом, 1995-м - счастья, мира, процветания

Из почты Президента Туркменистана

Figure 5: January 1995

Вчера страна почтила
память своих героев

Туркменистан,
Отчизна любимая,
край родимый мой,
и в мыслях, и сердцем
я всегда с тобой,
За малейшее зло,
причиненное тебе,
да отнимется рука моя.
За малейший навет на тебя
да обессилеет язык мой.
В час измены Родине,
Сапармурату Туркменбаши,
священному стягу твоему
да прервется дыхание мое.

Первое нейтральное государство в мире, признанное ООН, - это наша Родина - Туркменистан!

Нейтральный
ТУРКМЕНИСТАН

Учредитель - Президент Туркменистана Сапармурат ТУРКМЕНБАШИ

Издается с ноября 1924 года (до 13 декабря 1995 года «Туркменская искра») №12 (22850) Суббота, 13 января 2001 года Цена 500 манатов

Сапармурат ТУРКМЕНБАШИ:
«Чтить память великих предков -
значит верно служить независимой Родине»

12 января 2001 года. В городах, поселках, селах Туркменистана приспущены Государственные флаги. Сегодня, в святую для верующих пятницу, страна почтила память своих героев. В мечетях, домах люди возносят молитвы за упокой души, светлую память соотечественников, павших в борьбе за свободу и независимость многострадальной родной земли, отдавших самое дорогое - свою жизнь - ради обрели бессмертие в благодарной памяти потомков. Высоко оценил подвиг геоктепинцев Президент Сапармурат Туркменбаши в одном из своих выступлений. В геоктепинском сражении, сказал глава государства, среди туркмен не было ни одного малодушного, предателя. Это поистине туркменское создание независимого нейтрального Туркменистана, сплочение нации, возвышение ее чести и достоинства во всем мире, строительстве мощного государства, уверенно идущего в свой золотой век по пути процветания и прогресса.

Затем Сердар Сапармурат Туркменбаши

Figure 6: January 2001

САПАРМУРАТ ТУРКМЕНБАШИ:
ПОКЛОНИСЬ, ТУРКМЕН, СВОЕЙ СВЯЩЕННОЙ ЗЕМЛЕ, НАД КОТОРОЙ РЕЕТ ФЛАГ СВЯЩЕННОЙ НЕЗАВИСИМОСТИ!

Туркменистан,
Отчизна любимая,
край родимый мой,
и в мыслях, и сердцем
я всегда с тобой,
За малейшее зло,
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В час измены Родине,
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да прервется дыхание мое.

Первое в мире нейтральное государство, признанное ООН, - это наша Родина - Туркменистан!

Нейтральный
ТУРКМЕНИСТАН

Учредитель - Президент Туркменистана Сапармурат ТУРКМЕНБАШИ

Издается с ноября 1924 года (до 13 декабря 1995 года «Туркменская искра») №288 (24111) 2 Санджар 2004 г., яшгюн (вторник, 2 ноября 2004 года)

Его Превосходительству господину Сапармурату Атаевичу НИЯЗОВУ, Президенту нейтрального Туркменистана

Ваше Превосходительство,

Его Превосходительству господину Сапармурату НИЯЗОВУ, Президенту Туркменистана

По случаю Дня независимости Туркменистана от имени вьетнамского народа и от себя лично шлю Вам и народу Туркменистана самые горячие поздравления.

Я глубоко убежден, что дружественные отношения и традиционное сотрудничество между Вьетнамом и Туркменистаном будут и впредь крепнуть и развиваться в интересах народов наших стран, во имя мира и стабильности в регионе и в мире.

Желаю Туркменистану мира и процветания.

Желаю Вам, господин Президент, крепкого здоровья и больших успехов на Вашем высоком и весьма ответственном посту.

Чан Дык ЛЬОНГ,
Президент Социалистической Республики Вьетнам.

Его Превосходительству господину Сапармурату Атаевичу НИЯЗОВУ, Президенту Туркменистана

Шлю Вам и вашему народу сердечные поздравления по случаю национального праздника Туркменистана - Дня независимости.

Пользуясь этим случаем, желаю вашему дружному народу прогресса, процветания и благополучия. Я выражаю уверенность в том, что отношения дружбы и сотрудничества между нашими двумя странами будут и дальше расширяться и развиваться.

Ким Ен НАМ,
Председатель Президиума Верховного Народного Собрания Корейской Народно-Демократической Республики.

Его Превосходительству господину Сапармурату Атаевичу НИЯЗОВУ, Президенту Туркменистана

Его Превосходительству господину Сапармурату Атаевичу НИЯЗОВУ, Президенту Туркменистана

Первому и пожизненному Президенту Туркменистана Великому Сапармурату Туркменбаши

Дорогой наш Сердар Великий Сапармурат Туркменбаши!

Figure 7: November 2004

APPENDIX B: Streetplan of Contemporary Ashgabat

Figure 8: Chart from newspaper article detailing the renaming of the streets. 10 March 2001 *Netralnyy Turkmenistan*, p. 4

APPENDIX C: Buildings and Monuments of Contemporary Ashgabat

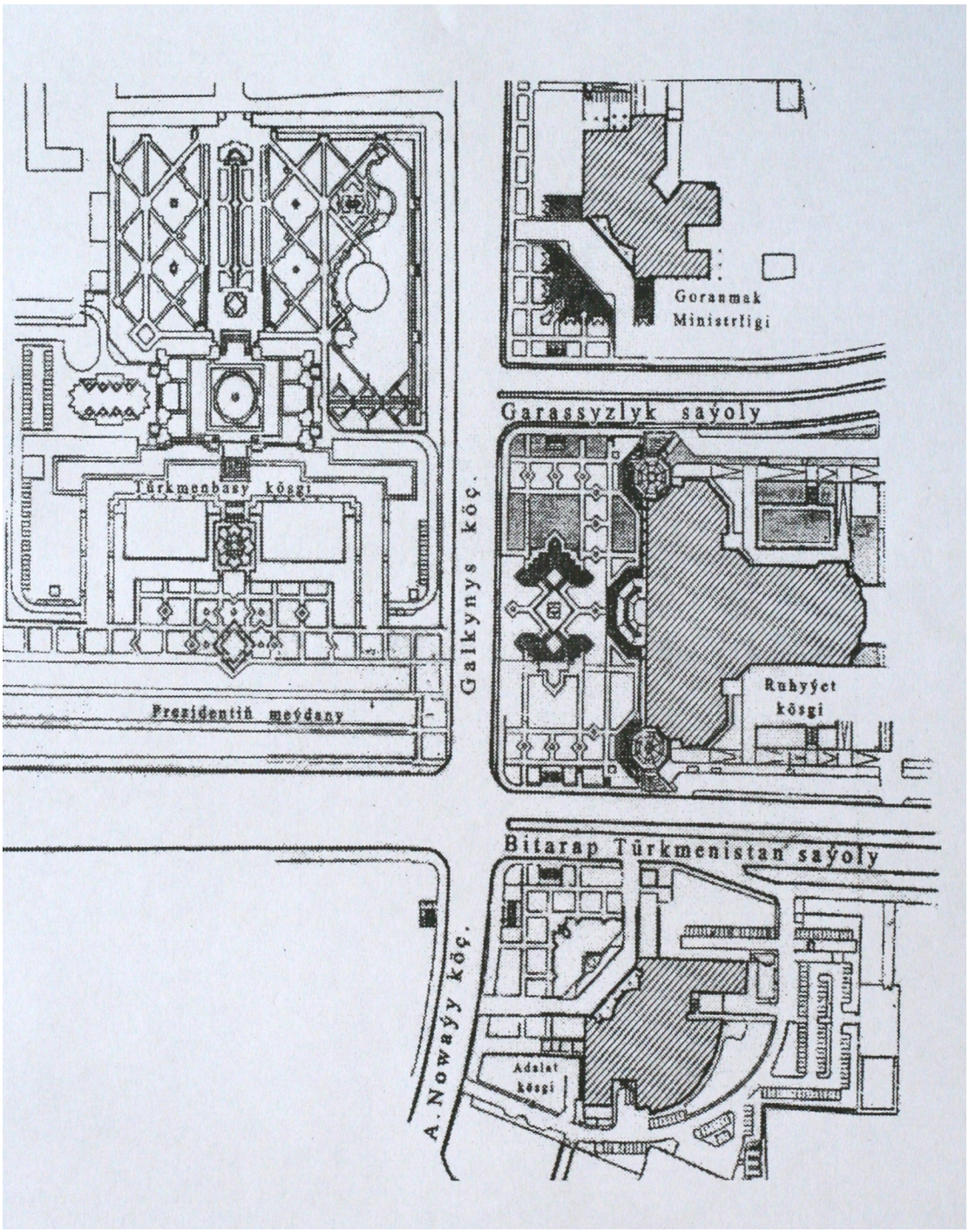

Figure 9: Layout of city centre, including squares and government buildings, Esenow 103.

Figure 10: Presidential Palace in Presidential Square

Figure 11: The Arch of Neutrality in Neutrality Square

Figure 12: The Memorial to the Earthquake Victims in Neutrality Square

Figure 13: National Library (formerly Karl Marx Library), the Soviet holdover on Presidential Square

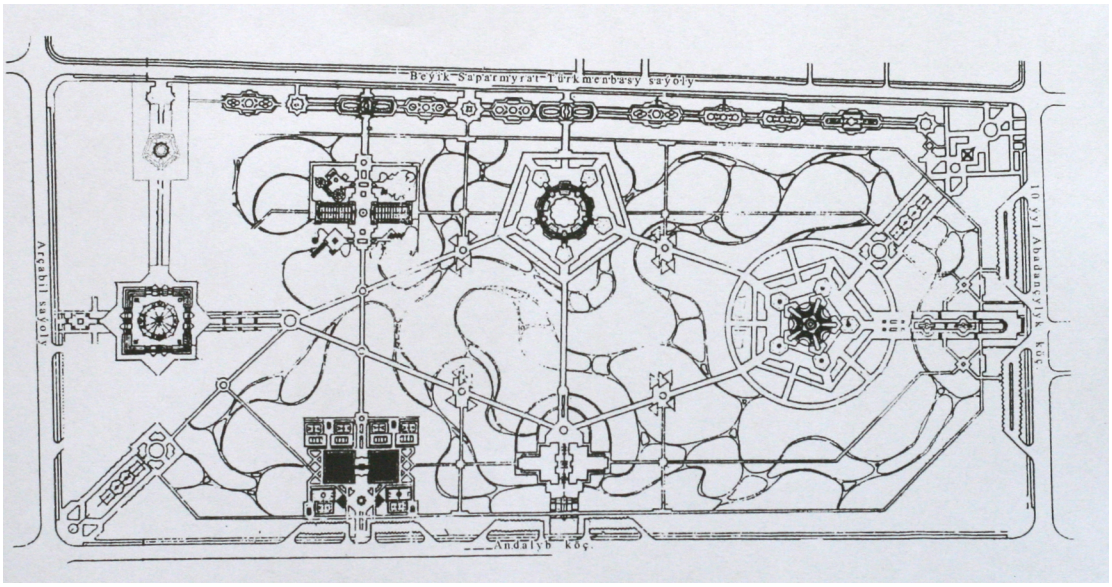

Figure 14: Layout of Independence Park. Esenow, 344.

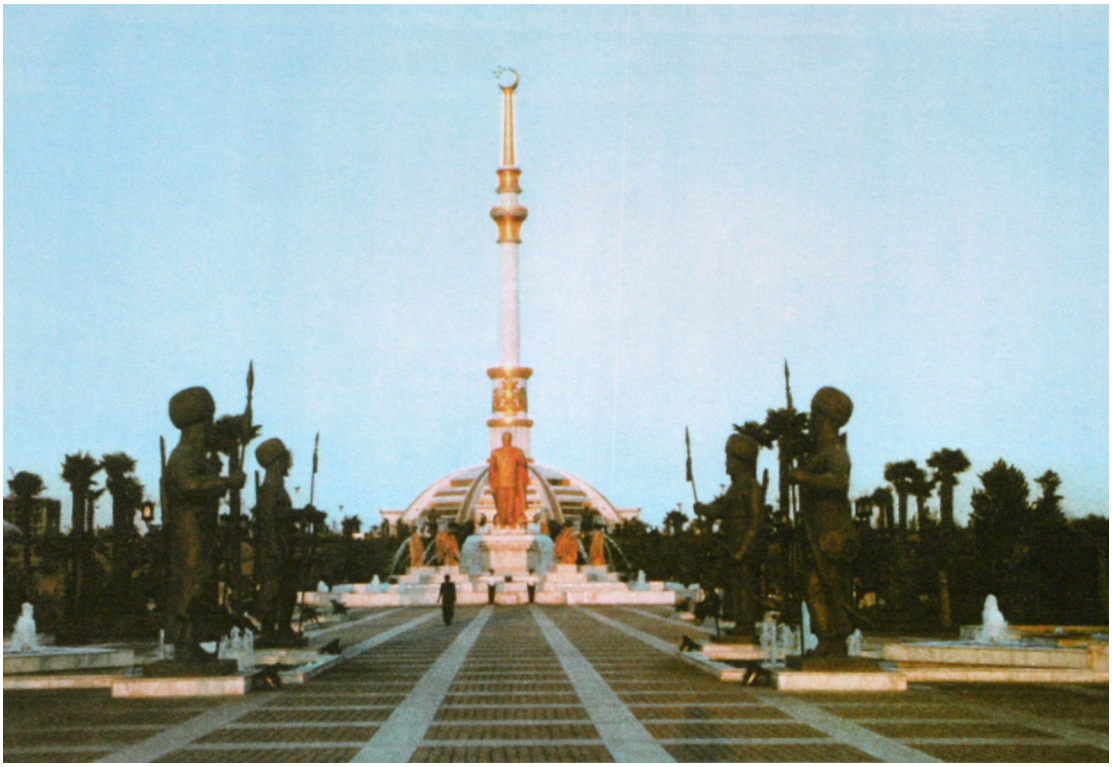

Figure 15: Monument to Independence

Figure 16: Monument to Ruhnama

Figure 17: Exterior of Mosque Saparmurat Haji, Goktepe

Figure 18: Interior of Mosque Saparmurat Haji, Goktepe. Esenow, 403.

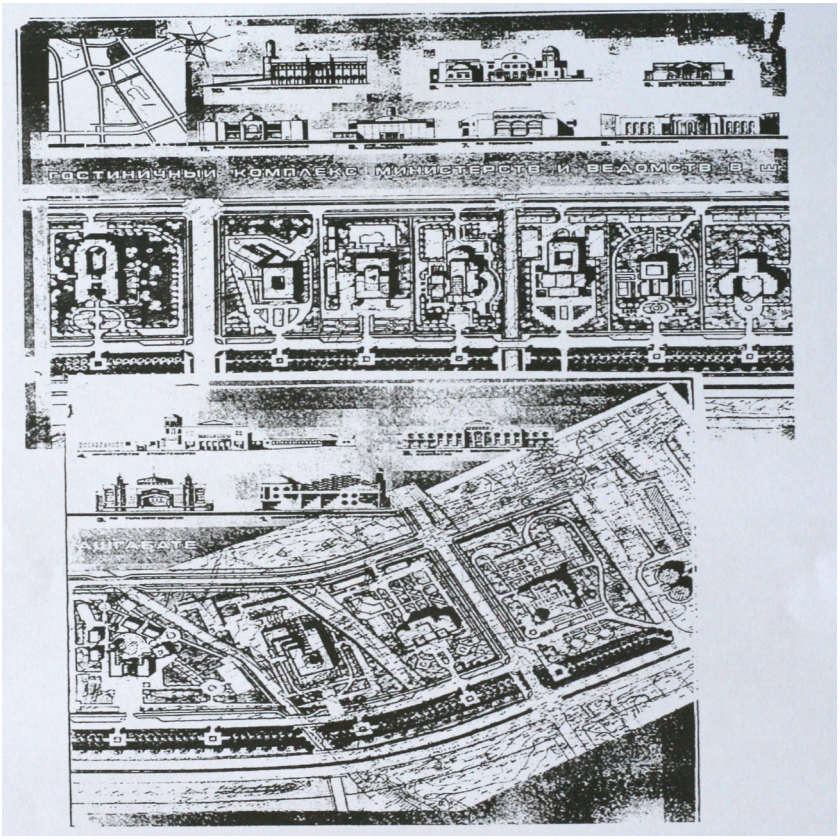

Figure 19: Plans for the District of Berzengi, Archabil highway from Esenow, 216

Figure 20: Exterior of Gara-Altyn Hotel, Berzengi District

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